



Our Jeames.

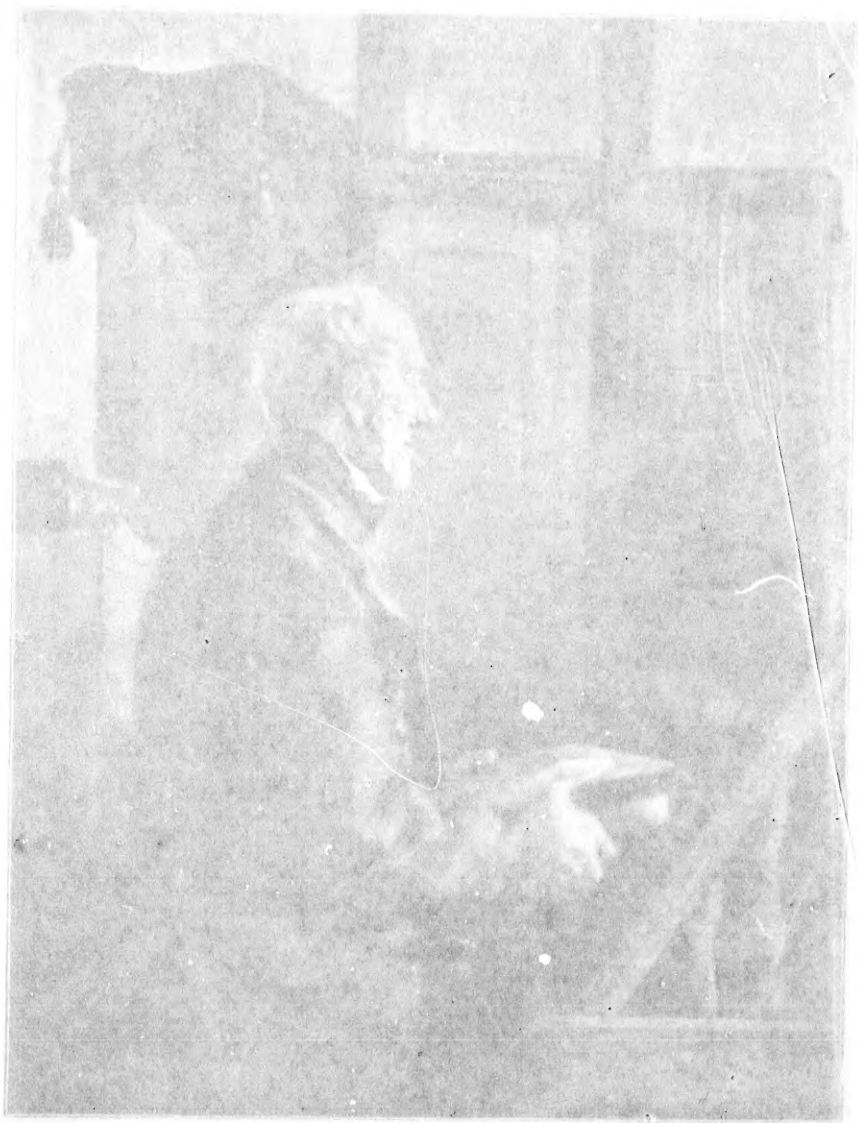
WICKHAM KARTDALE.

OF FRAMES.

J. M. WICKHAM & HENDERSON.

MONTREAL:

JOHN WICKHAM & CO.



Our Jeames.

THE
CHRONICLES OF KARTDALE.

OUR JEAMES.

EDITED BY
J. MURDOCH HENDERSON.

MONTREAL :
WILLIAM DRYSDALE & CO.
1896.

PS8465

A77

C5

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-six, by WILLIAM DRYSDALE & CO. in the Office of the Minister of Agriculture.

PREFACE.

When I first made the acquaintance of the old schoolmaster of Brighton, I little thought that he would ever make of me a literary legatee. Indeed, it was only after years of friendly intercourse with him, that I discovered he had been putting his pen to paper in behalf of posterity. Though he was a man endowed with an intelligence readily discerned, and one in whose company I always derived the greatest comfort, as he would sit at my fireside of a winter's night, spinning his yarns about Kartdale and its neighbourhood, the thought never struck me that he was ever likely to become a candidate for literary fame. His manner was always the reticence of modesty itself. One evening, however, he arrived at my house, with a portmanteau in his hand, and, after the usual greetings, I noticed that he set it down carefully within the parlour door. My first thought was that the old gentleman was going to stay with me all night, and the idea naturally gave me the highest delight, since our sederunt could thus be prolonged to "the wee short hour ayont the twal." But by and by I found out my mistake. The old schoolmaster did not intend to stay with me all night. His portmanteau contained no part of his wardrobe. And nobody could have been

more taken aback than I was, when, after a preliminary conversation on sundry subjects, the old man told me, not without a very careful breaking of the ice, that he had made up his mind to make me his literary executor. Of course I urged my literary inexperience, and the danger there would be to his name and fame in employing a novice as his editor. But he would take no denial. He had long been convinced that I was the only man to whom he could intrust the task of looking over his papers, when he was dead and gone; and when there came a quaver in the old man's voice as he opened his portmanteau and lifted from its compartments several piles of manuscript, I felt how impotent I was to do anything that would tend to bring discomfort to the old gentleman. Thus did I become the old schoolmaster's literary executor. And now after careful revision of his autobiography, as well as of his sketches, short tales and verses, I have decided to present to the public this the first instalment of the literary remains of the most sterling friend I ever had.

In these sketches I have made little or no attempt to change the old man's style, about which the reader may notice, perhaps, the least possible flavour of the schoolmaster's proverbial verbosity. My only justification in presuming to see his writings through the press, lies in the hope that the merits of the author may force the reader to think as seldom as possible of the editor.

J. M. H.

OUR JEAMES.

The gloaming of life has no tale to avow
Compared with the tale of the springtide that's past :
The griefs of the then are the joys of our now,
The bad is a better, the good is our best.

Although more than a hundred years have elapsed since Kartdale first started on its prosperous career as a manufacturing centre, it is even yet at times looked upon by some of its sister parishes as a kind of a new place. As everybody knows who has studied the gazetteer of Scotland, the town has had a very rapid growth, much more rapid, it is said, than any other town of its size from the Cheviots to John O'Groat's House; and although the industries which first gave its commercial activities an impulse—the weaving and the cotton-spinning trades—have now all but died out, others have taken their place, and at the present writing the burgh of Kartdale continues to be one of the most thriving towns in the west. The valley in which it is situated is watered by a stream, which provides many of the factories with a never-failing water power, and which drains an outside broadening plain that extends to the banks of the parent river. On account of the level character of

the site on which the town itself is built, the streets have a regular appearance, radiating at right angles from the Main Street, which formed in early days the king's highway, and which is now, as its name implies, the principal thoroughfare. A local artist has published a series of sketches of the principal buildings of the town, among which, of course, take rank as the most interesting, the seven churches. It is needless to say that these sketches have a special interest to those who have not seen the place for years, and when the news was carried to the writer, who has been away from the old scenes for more than a quarter of a century now, that a new minister had been inducted to the charge of one of the churches the artist has so skilfully depicted, there came welling up in his memory the personality of this one and of that one who would have been present at the installation ceremonies, had death or absence from Kartdale not prevented them. It must now be nearly forty years since the "placing" of the incumbent who lately retired, was celebrated in the little edifice—forty years of busy life to him, forty years of changes—ah, how many!—to his congregation; and yet nearly all the incidents connected with the earlier ceremony came out clearly on the writer's memory, as he sat in a kind of mesmeric dream over the artist's pen-and-ink delineation of the "auld biggin" in which it took place. The improvised platform with its rows of ministers assembled from the neighbouring parishes, the laying on of hands and the addresses to the newly ordained minister and his people, the soiree in the evening and the presentation of pulpit-gown and Bible, the congratulations and

the home-rejoicings—all came up before him, for the moment, as if the event had been but of yesterday. And again the humble pageant has been repeated.

In the description given of the more recent installation observances, there is no mention made of the church-officer; and yet few of us still living, who were present at the former "placing," can fail to remember the old man who, as sexton, was the busy master of ceremonies on that occasion. Things may have changed since then, and the wings of the present incumbent of Jeames's office may have been clipped; but we can hardly think that the personality of our friend Jeames, for every boy in our time recognized in Jeames a friend, is likely to be forgotten as long as there are tongues in the parish of Kartdale to gossip of the past. For be it known that Jeames was a character, perhaps the last of the race which Dean Ramsay has so well depicted by anecdote and illustration. Like the class of which he was a relic, his eccentricity was more of the office than of the man. There was in him a certain kind of ability which commanded respect even from those above his station in life, while with the younger folks of the congregation he was not only a favourite but a man of great weight in theological disputings. Towards the latter he was as obliging and condescending in his manner as he was to the elders of the church. Indeed, he had a way of meeting the impertinences of youth—no boy ever thought of being actually impudent to Jeames—which seldom failed to put a check upon them; and yet, at the same time, his manner with the obstreperous was so gentle and unassertive, except in matters pertaining

to dogma and church creeds, that he seldom lost his popularity even with the misdemeanant whom he had occasion to reprove. In a word, Jeames was looked upon as being as much of a permanency about the church as any other individual connected with it.

As a weaver, Jeames had never prospered. But for his office in the church, he would have, no doubt, taken rank as a mere "puir body" in the town. The office was the man, and Jeames was by no means slow to emphasize the fact whenever an opportunity occurred to magnify his office. According to his own opinion, variously expressed, he was, without doubt, the next highest official to the minister, even to the exclusion of the precentor or the ruling elder; and always when he spoke of the congregation over which, as he was accustomed to say, "we preside, as it were," the expression "*our kirk*" had about it, as uttered by him, an unction which neither italics nor inverted commas can possibly represent. Nor was the dignity of his office by any means concealed when he undertook to discuss some knotty point of theology with the younger folks, of a Sabbath afternoon in the session-house. On such occasions his utterances were nearly always given *ex cathedra*, in tones which seemed to ward off all discussion. With the most of us Jeames had no equal as a theologian in the church, unless it were the minister and one or two of the elders, though we had no means of comparing him with these, seeing they never thought of discussing theological difficulties with us. Indeed, it was through Jeames's teachings that many of us had our first wrestlings with Calvinism, and thus learned to defend ourselves against

the heterodoxy of other creeds and denominations. In him we found a living exponent of the faith our fathers professed ; in him was to be seen the possessor of a logical insight that could detect the foul fallacies of Armenianism, as he called them, or of any other *ism* that was not to be identified as part and parcel of the true Presbyterianism. Gifted with a fluency of speech which seldom halted to pay respect to an interruption, he was all the more able to show to advantage his intimate knowledge of the history of the Bible and its teachings, interlarding his arguments, as he always did, with some of the many hundreds of texts he had memorized during his moments of leisure.

"I'm no gaun to say," he would sometimes declare, "that there's nae chance for ither folk ; that would maybe be to gang ower faur, and be unnecessarily limiting the mercy o' God himsel' ; though the Confession o' Faith is in itsel' nae respecter o' persons outside the pale o' Presbyterianism. But whether or no ither folk forbye Presbyterians hae a chance, there's ae thing I hae decided in my ain mind, and that is that the man wha doesnae attend our kirk is living at a disadvantage, if no to his morals, at least to his theology. The spoon-meat that is whiles served out to some o' our neighbours, gin a' stories be true, maun surely be fushionless stuff. Exactly sae !"

Or at other times when he happened to notice some stranger in the church of a Sabbath, he would often say :—"We are mightily glad to see outsiders coming to hear us, even if it be only occasionally. The sugh o' the truth cannae be hauden within our four walls, thick though they be. The report o' the manfu' ex-

positions o' our humble organization cannae but hae an effect on the outside world, and thereby induce the spoon-fed folk o' our neighborhood to come within the influence o' things better than they're accustomed to. Man, when I sometimes look in the e'en o' thae stranger bodies that come to hear us, as they sit drinking in ilka word o' the discourse, I see how wonderfully the right o't, sae eloquently expressed frae aboon my seat, refreshes them in their hearts and very souls. They actually gang hame new creatures. Exactly sae !”

As has been hinted, the session-house was Jeames's theological hall. It consisted of a small compartment enclosed underneath the gallery of the church in the north-west corner of the quaint old square edifice; and there it was, during the interval of public worship, or, as has been said, in the afternoon before Sunday-school, that Jeames was accustomed to have a band of eager listeners around, listening to his dogmatic utterances, or what was more interesting, to a discussion between him and some young or elderly disputant, as the case might be. During the winter months, these audiences were always at their largest, since to the interest of the sexton's disquisitions there was added the comfort of a glowing fire in the large old-fashioned stove which stood in a corner of the room. There was not a little of the Socratic method about Jeames's teachings, though there was seldom any of the irony of the wily Athenian to be detected in them. Like the great Grecian philosopher, he was for ever searching after the truth, though it was always after the manner of one who had found it; and however at times he

would fall a victim to some shrewd antagonist, he was seldom unsuccessful in his raids against youthful ignorance.

Innovations of any kind, from the improving of the heating apparatus to the slightest change in the manner of conducting the service, were Jeames's abhorrence, though it must in justice be said of him that he was never the last to give in, when the changes had once been accomplished.

"An innovation is the finger-post to a heresy," he was accustomed to say, "and it's mair than I can understan' how men can gie way to the new-fangled notions o' a wheen o' bee-headed loons, wha care as muckle about the purifying o' God's house, as did the Pharisees and money-changers o' auld. The women folks are aye easily enough carried awa' by sic faldarri's; but that men, in whom God breathed the breath o' life and manhood, should think weel o' heresy in any form is past my comprehension. Gie them ane o' thae new-fangled psalm-tunes, and they want a baund; gie them a baund and they'll want an organ, and gie them the kist o' whistles, and afore ye ken whaur ye are, ye'll hae the minister dressed in crimson and a cocked hat, wi' caunles burning a' about him in the pulpit. Exactly sae!"

"Let sic heretics as wish for a new and improved psalmody and kirk service," he would sometimes continue in spite of interruption, "let sic heretics, I say, read the Scots' Worthies, and there they'll find in a book maist as honestly and inspiredly written as the Bible itsel', something about the simplicity o' public worship, when our forefathers had neither pulpit nor

pew to sit in. Their simple service was guid enough for them, honest men, and is surely guid enough for us that cannae boast o' a' their piety or upright conduct, or even the half o't. Gin I had my will, I would stick to their plan o' worship as a saving grace. For few will deny that their hearts were in the right place, or say that their way o' thinking was nae sound."

On one occasion, after due consideration, the session had come to the decision that the old practice of reading the line should be discontinued by the precentor. The practice handed down probably from Knox's time, when many of the common people were unable to read, had been introduced into "our kirk" by the men who had built it; and such a "use and wont" ceremony could hardly disappear without giving some little offence to the older adherents. Of those who were offended, or professed to be offended for a time, was our friend Jeames, and as usual he was not slow to express his indignation at what he called an innovation that would be sure to lead to something worse.

"Guid forgie us for the sacrilege!" was his exclamation to some of his more youthful disciples, during the afternoon of the day on which the precentor laid aside the semblance of the town-crier as he intoned the sacred words that were to be sung, after his recital of them in the keynote of the psalm-tune. "Ay, Guid forgie us for the sacrilege! Gin there be ae kind o' a theft waur than anither, it is surely the thieving that puts its hand to the public worship o' God's ain folk, that begrudges the richness in length and breadth o' a people's piety as expressed in praise o' Him that made us a'. This scrimpin' o' our feelings as expressed in

words is naething short o' profanity, and if Providence owerlook it, it is maybe mair than it has ony right to dae."

"But whaur is the profanity?" asked one of the lads whose father was one of those who had advocated the change. "If there be profanity in it, it maun surely be profanity unspoken."

"And is there nae sic a thing as aiths unborn?" exclaimed Jeames. "Ah, my man, ye maun ken there is a profanity of omission as weel as o' commission, though maybe ye are ower young to understand the maitter as I do. But wait till ye're as aulá as I am, and ye'll maybe experience how fine a thing it is in the worship o' God to hae your mouth saturated twice ower wi' the contrite words o' the inspired psalmist."

Among the adherents of Jeames's philosophy class, some of whom were fairly well up in their schooling, as the saying is, the above doctrine was for ever after known as Jeames's "dogma of double saturation."

Little things disturb small communities, the discussion over them often leading to the verge of disintegration. Some time after the noise in connection with the above-mentioned innovation had subsided, and when people had come to speak of it as a custom of the past only to be laughed at, the precentor thought to introduce one Sunday morning—some said on his own responsibility, though he would hardly have dared do that—one of those psalm tunes—St. Anne's, perhaps—in which the last two lines of the stanza are repeated in the course of singing it. There had been rumors afloat for some weeks before that such a thing was in contemplation; for the singing class which the

precentor conducted once a week in the session-house, would hardly have been engaged, as was said, in practising such a tune, unless some use were going to be made of it. The whole congregation was therefore on the *qui vive* for the innovation, ready to be divided into two parties the moment the new tune was to be heard in the church proper. Of course Jeames knew that there was something afoot, and he and some of the other more conservative of the brethren had been seen shaking their heads in mournful conference over the matter, although they were intelligent enough not to condemn a thing before it had been tried. The only man that really uplifted his voice against the movement in its embryo state, was one Robin Drum, an honest sort of a man who had, moreover, an opinion of his own on most matters, though the opinion was not always shared in by his neighbours. Perhaps it was Robin's opposition that produced the most of the excitement over the introduction of the new tune, for people were beginning to listen to the advocacy which some of the Presbyterian ministers were entering upon at the time for an improved psalmody ; at least he was known to have spoken his mind quite freely on the subject to Jeames, bringing his indignation to the fever point of threatening to leave the church if the precentor's plans were not frustrated.

"Ye maun nae think o' sic a thing at your time o' life," Jeames is said to have advised. "Ve hae been sae lang accustomed to the wholesome food o' our bit sanctuary here, that ye would fairly starve yoursel' in any ither communion : ye maun nae think o' sic a thing."

"Starve or no starve," Robin is said to have replied, "I'll no stand this kind o' thing. It would be rank hypocrisy for me no to resist this attempt o' Satan to mingie wi' the sons o' God in their worship as in the days o' Job, seeing I'm convinced in my ain mind that the ways o' Satan and the scarlet lady are but ane and the same; and ye'll hardly be inclined to think itherwise yoursel, considering your responsibilities as an officer in God's temple, when ye contemplate the attempts that are bein' made to introduce skirlin' tunes that hae their proper place amang the roistering ne'er-do-weels o' Satan's kingdom in the goose-dubs o' a fause religion."

"You're nae doubt right in a' that ye say, Mr. Drum," answered Jeames, "but we maun jist haud our souls in patience until we hear what the thing is like. I'm no a man to condemn a thing afore proving it, and, come what may, I think I'll stick to the auld biggin', and I think sae should you, Mr. Drum. In this worl' we may gang farder for a guid thing and fare waur than in our kirk, whaur the doctrine is sound enough, even if the service should gang a wee bit aglee."

The influence of neither Robin Drum nor Jeames, however, had any effect upon the precentor, who, on a subsequent Sabbath, put up the long tickets or psalm-tune cards on either side of him with as much nonchalance as if the new tune were but an ordinary one. All went well enough until the fourth line was completed; but when the precentor returned to the third line of the verse to repeat it, all eyes were directed towards a movement in Robin Drum's seat, where he,

his wife and their seven children arose simultaneously, and, at a signal given by the head of the Drum household, marched in procession down the long aisle, seemingly keeping step to the precentor's singing. Of course such an incident could not but create a commotion after the restraint of the service was over, and but for the merriment created by a wag who rechristened the unfortunate tune by calling it "Robin Drum's March," the discussions might have taken a more serious turn for the peace of the congregation. As it was, there was discussion enough about the matter during the week, the minister having at last to interfere by calling upon Mr. Drum and promising to have his opinion respected as far as it was possible.

Jeames, of course, continued for a time in opposition to what he called "the unsightly desecration o' the precentor's box." But it was in the afternoon after the offence to Robin's feelings had occurred, that his indignation rose to its higher degree of temperature.

"Woe unto that thing by which offences come!" he exclaimed to his youthful friends in the session-house. "Robin Drum may be headstrong in some things, but he's honest for a' that. I'm no gaun' to justify him in the course he has ta'en, but the thing that has offended him should not be tolerated in any truly Christian place o' worship. Let this thing continue, and we'll hae a baund in the kirk afore mony months gang by. Exactly sae!"

"But what is wrang wi' the tune?" asked one of his listeners.

"It's no' the tune that's sae far wrang, if it would only stop at the right place; but for us to gang on

skirlin' the last twa lines, as if we wanted to impress the Almighty wi' the sweetness o' our singing—a pridefu' thing for onybody to dae—is mair than ony upright man can stand."

"It may be right enough what you say," said his disciple, respectfully, though not without a twinkle in his eye, "but I'm afraid, Jeames, ye haenae yet experienced to its fullest extent, how fine a thing it is in the worship o' God to hae your mouth saturated twice ower wi' the contrite words o' the inspired psalmist;" and thus it was that Jeames's "dogma of double saturation," became better known than ever from its once being wielded to his own disadvantage in argument.

But after all that has been told of the worthy sexton, it remains to be said that among his many virtues there lurked a vice, or at least what some people even in his time were beginning to denounce as a vice. The fact is, Jeames was fond of a glass, a habit which he himself, in speaking of it, declared to have been contracted in his younger days when the weaver lads with whom he associated had more pence than prudence. And as there are few men, in the lower walks of life, at least, who are more highly esteemed than they deserve, so it was with Jeames, when his character was being discussed by the "unco' guid." His chief fault, if not his only one, always seemed to come uppermost with some folk, who, even when praising him for some remark he had made or some kindness he had done, were sure to regret that such an obliging, simple-minded man should ever be apt to forget himself. But if the truth of the matter had always been kept in view in regard to Jeames's wee bits of trials, as he

called them, his half-and-half friends—for he had no foes—would have been more inclined than they were to blame those who paid for his treats than the poor man himself. Indeed, Jeames had no money of his own to spend in either treating himself or other people, and when he did happen to get a toothful too much, as the saying is, he had no doubt been drawn on by the couthiness of the crack with some drouthy neighbour who was willing enough to pay the lawing to have the benefit of the crack. For if Jeames was an interesting conversationalist at most of times, he was even more so when he had a glass in, and as he was known in a social way by everybody of his own class in the town, it was often difficult enough for him to take a walk down the street and escape the necessity of licking his lips or using a peppermint drop.

On one occasion, and only one, as far as can be remembered, did James's predilection in the matter of strong waters lead him into what could be called a serious difficulty, as far as his position as church-officer was concerned. And here it may be said that the worthy sexton was not a man ever given to drink himself beyond all self-conscious cognizance. As has been said, he was a man fond of his glass, and seldom or never went beyond two or three at a time, even under the most pressing inducements; but on the occasion in which he became seriously involved with the dignitaries of the congregation, he unfortunately happened to take his glass or two at a very inopportune season, and thus fell a victim to circumstances, as many have done before and since, even when engaged in committing a less doubtful act of piety than taking a

glass of whiskey on a Sunday morning. But the story had better be told in something like the language which Jeames himself used, when he afterwards gave it as one of the most serious experiences of his life.

"I'm no ane to justify ony act o' mine that has even the appearance o' evil about it," he would say. "There's nae doubt I was wrang; but when on the Sunday morning I met Willie Turnbull, and saw how anxious he was to find somebody to join him jist for a minute or sae in the Cross Keys near by, I had nae the heart to refuse him, for he is really a kind-hearted young man is Willie; and since he has maybe ower muckle siller in his hand for a man o' his time o' life, and is hardly possessed o' strength o' mind enough to keep it, there cannae be very much harm in encouraging him at times to spend some o't on ither folk that hae hard times to mak' ends meet. Ye ken, it is aye my custom, when the morning is guid, to tak' a bit stroll through the town as soon as I hae seen everything put to rights in the kirk; and sae it was on the Sunday I speak of; it was a fine frosty morning, and I hadnae got further than the middle o' the square, when wha should turn up but Willie himsel', a wee kenning bleared about the e'en, and looking kind o' disconsolate like."

"A guid morning to ye, Mr. Turnbull,' says I to him as I made to continue my stroll.

"It may be a guid enough morning to you, Jeames,' said he, 'but I'm thinking my head 'ill not let me see it in the same light as you;' and he laughed a kind o' cheerless laugh. 'By the way, do you think the Cross Key folks are up yet, Jeames?'

“‘I’m sure I cannae tell,’ said I, ‘but there’s naething like trying to get them up, if ye really want them.’

“‘Come awa then,’ said he, ‘and we’ll try,’ and he made to put his airm into mine.

“‘Na, na,’ said I, ‘this is Sunday morning, and it’s no for me to be seen to gang into a public-house on sic a day, when the responsibilities o’ my office are upon me,’ and I again made to pass on. But the re I discussed the maitter with him, the mair importun becam’, and sae it wrought about that just as we were passing the door o’ the inn, the landlord himsel’ happened to step out for a moment, just to get a mouthfu’ o’ fresh air, and maybe to see what kind o’ a morning it was; sae we baith gaed in, in a natural enough way, and had an honest glass thegither.’

“‘So we’re gaun to hae the privilege o’ listening to a stranger in the pulpit, the day,’ said Willie to me after a bit.

“‘I’m no sae sure about it bein’ a privilege,’ said I, ‘for folk dinnae ken what kind o’ doctrine a man may preach until he’s fairly tried. If he hae the paper afore him, we’re aye sure o’ his orthodoxy, for its kittle work for ony Presbyterian minister to read a heterodox sermon and no get girmed. There’s nae contradictory evidence to save him afore the Presbytery if only they hae his sermon in writing.’

“‘I’m afraid it’s weel concealed heterodoxy that ’ill escape you,’ Jeames,’ said he, and afore lang we were in the deeps o’ an honest crack wi’ anither glass to crown it, and afore we got through, it cam’ near enough to the ringing o’ the bell, for me to hurry awa’ to see after my duties.’

The sequel was well enough known to everybody to require any personal explanations on the part of Jeames in the narrating of it afterwards or even now.

The clear frosty weather, though in itself exhilarating in its effects, only served to counteract the exhilarating effects of Jeames's potations, and with the assistance of the timely peppermint drop which covered at least the smell of his transgression, he managed to escape detection as he busied himself with his Sabbath morning duties. The congregation assembled in due time, and the minister took his place, and at last Jeames sat down in his seat in the pew near the pulpit, the most prominent in the church, next to the precentor's box.

Everything went on well enough during the opening services, but hardly had the stranger in the pulpit reached his "firstly," after the usual introduction, when a soft breathing sound was heard issuing from the betherell's pew, loud enough to attract some attention. It wasn't a whistle, but it was something that might develop into such, if something worse did not happen. Of course Jeames did not succumb to his enemy all at once, for every now and again he would jerk back his head as if in protest against any accusation that might be urged against his sleeping while on duty, and with an evident desire in his drowsy eye to follow the discourse. The struggle by no means lessened the interest taken in the poor man's movements on the part of the congregation, though the minister, quite unconscious of all that was going on within the precincts of the pulpit, kept closely to his paper as if all his points were being duly appreciated. The younger

folks had taken in the situation from the beginning, and probably would have tittered in their excitement but for the frowns that began to gather on the brows of their more sedate guardians at the head of the seats. At last the climax came. Jeames's head fell upon his bosom, and the soft breathing of a stolen nap began to grow in its intensity, until eventually the victim of circumstances began to snore, and, what was worse, began to whistle by way of accompaniment. At the first sound the minister paused for a moment, at the second he looked over the pulpit, and at the third he wisely went on with his sermon as if there was nothing amiss. But he might as well have been reading a discourse to the stones in the graveyard, for all attention was fixed upon the hapless sexton; all were wondering how the incident would end. Would he awake before the sermon was over? And what would he think of himself when he did awake? Would the service close and the people be dismissed before he came to his senses? And what would the elders and managers do about the matter afterwards? The man who sat in the seat nearest to Jeames slammed the door of his pew, as if by accident, but the sound had no effect upon the unconscious sleeper. The precentor moved nervously in his seat, and looked as if he would like to go over and touch him on the shoulder, but on second thought, considering what a breach of ceremonial etiquette such conduct would be, settled down to endure the calamity that had fallen upon his neighbour with official nonchalance. Then the man that had slammed his pew door, took out his handkerchief as if to wipe the perspiration from his brow, and blew a

nasal blast in it that might have awakened the seven sleepers ; but all unavailingly, for Jeames slept and snored and whistled, and whistled and snored, as unconscious of the turmoil he was creating as was Jonah of the fate of Nineveh during his term of retirement within his cetaceous retreat. The elders frowned of course, but what could they do ? What they would do afterwards was a different question. The managers looked at one another, as if to take silent counsel, but the awe of the place was upon them and they had not been trained to converse with their eyebrows. At last, seeing that there was no help for it, scandal or no scandal, the ruling elder despatched his son to awaken the misdemeanant, and just as the minister was drawing towards his "lastly," the youth touched Jeames's coat sleeve. But it was no gentle touch that could disturb such a sleeper. Then he tapped him on the shoulder, but finding that ineffectual, he at last gave him a shake. Then Jeames awoke.

"But mercy on me what an awakening," as some one said afterwards, "The puir man started up wi' a snort as if some ane had put a knife in him wi' deadly intent. Then he looked a' around him, and as his consciousness cam' back, I would like to ken wha could prevent the maist o' the congregation frae laughing at the puir man's plight ; even the elders had to repress the smile that would come, whether or no. The fact is, if it hadnae happened in the kirk on Sunday morning, I don't think there would hae been a dry e'e, or a painless side for laughing, in the hale audience. But I'm afraid it'll no be guid for him in the lang run."

Nor at one time in the course of the subsequent investigations, first by the managers to consider whether he should be continued in his office, and second by the session, whether he should not be severely disciplined, did it seem as if the luckless church-officer would escape with impunity. The poor man's mishap became for several weeks the talk of the congregation and even of the community at large, and all the explanations Jeames could make did not seem to find favor with those in authority.

"I'm afraid it's a' up wi' me, at last," he said one day to the ruling elder's son, the stripling who had brought things to a climax in the church, and who was known to have a good deal of influence with his father. "I'm afraid it's a' up wi' me at last, John, unless ye can put in a word for me wi' somebody we baith ken, that is high in authority at baith boards. The minister is a kindly man, and'll no be likely to be very hard on me; and then, ye ken, it wasnae under him I committed the offence o' fa'ing asleep in kirk. Indeed, I'm no very sure but it was the reading frae the paper by the strange minister that had something to dae wi' my backsliding on this occasion. It's hard to keep ane's e'en open when the exposition happens to be baith dry and dreech."

"But I'm afraid, Jeames, ye didnae hear even much o' the beginning o' the sermon," said the elder's son, knowing well enough what was expected from him.

"Weel, maybe you're right after a'," answered the betherell.

For a moment there was a pause as Jeames hung down his head, at finding his logic defective.

"Besides, what is this I hear about the Cross Keys and Willie Turnbull?" asked the elder's son.

"The Cross Keys?" exclaimed Jeames.

"Ay, the Cross Keys," was the reply.

"And Willie Turnbull?"

"Ay, and Willie Turnbull."

Jeames was dumfounded, and hung his head again, but this time with shame in his face. He was beginning to realize that sleeping in church was not his greatest offence. At last he looked up and asked the young man who it was that had told him that story.

"Naeboddy has telt me ony story, Jeames," answered the young man. "But some gleg-e'd folk saw him and you coming out o' the Cross Keys on the Sunday morning afore kirk time, and he's hardly the company for you to keep at sic a time."

"And dae they say I was fou?" asked the offender.

"No, they don't gang as far as that, but the elders think if ye hadnae seen Willie Turnbull that morning ye wouldnae hae been sae hard to wauken, and maybe ye wouldnae hae fa'n asleep at a'."

"Weel, maybe they're right after a'. Exactly sae!"

"The fact is, Jeames, and I speak to you as a friend—"

"I ken that brawly, John," interrupted the church-officer.

"The fact is," continued the young man, "that they're gaun to tak' nae half measures wi' ye, as faur as I hear; and I think the best thing ye can dae, is to mak' a clean breast o' everything, and throw yoursel' on the mercy o' the court. Don't ye think sae

yoursel', Jeames? In ither things you're generally a man o' sound judgment."

"Weel, maybe you're right again, John," said Jeames, after a moment's pause. "Exactly sae!" And thus it was that Jeames proceeded to tell the story as it has already been told in his own words, and there is nothing more to say about Jeames's mishap, except that the elder's son interceded with the father in the sexton's behalf, and the worthy man eventually escaped the terrors of dismissal with a reprimand from the managers, and a reproof from the session.

generally

ohn," said
tly sae!"
l the story
and there
ap, except
her in the
lly escaped
from the

THE CRACK O' DOOM.

CHAPTER I.

"What's the truth,—is't but a seeming?"

The wise man asks with doubting nod;

"What's the seeming,—only dreaming?

Has religion lost her God?"

The climax of terror to which superstition often leads, in a community as in the individual, is but a poor source from which to draw amusement. Nothing is so soon forgotten as pain when it has once subsided; and it is often easy enough to be merry over an experience of dread when the cause of our fears has been removed or explained. Children are often made sport of by the unthinking, on account of their seemingly absurd experiences in the dark; and yet, were those who indulge in merriment of this kind, to take time to investigate the laws that govern the imagination, as well as the mental activities it so often usurps or holds in suspense,—were they to trace, in any kind of a scientific spirit, the origin of the myth as a natural outgrowth from an individual experience, they would not only perceive how natural it is for all animals, on the impulse, from the lowest to the highest, to endow

the inanimate with a personality akin to their own, but be more inclined to sympathize with young and old, should they happen, for the moment, to locate the cause of their fear beyond themselves, when in reality it is altogether subjective. It is, therefore, to be hoped that the following incident in the history of Kartdale may be read, as it certainly is herewith written, in the light of some of the serious aspects of the case.

In common with nearly all towns and villages where evangelical influences at times have been confessedly epidemic, the community of Kartdale has had its periods of religious excitement and revival, though, perhaps, none of them is so well remembered by the older people of the present time as is that which had its origin in the visit of an enthusiastic and popular revivalist who came from the north many years ago, and who held a series of meetings for a week or more in the parish church. Never before had the parish church been besieged during week days by such multitudes of men and women—young and old—who flocked to hear the burning exhortations which fell from the lips of the preacher—for burning exhortations they really were, in more senses than one. Possessed of an eccentricity of oratorical action that seemed of itself to fascinate, and an emphasis of speech that flouted all religious doubt, and oracularly condemned all who were troubled with such, he fairly revelled in his delineations of the life beyond, especially of that after-endurance which is so often spoken of in the pulpit as eternal death. As he played with the imaginations of his hearers, he called forth from them in return vocal eccentricities of fervour and soul-

their own, but
young and old,
to locate the
then in reality
e, to be hoped
y of Kartdale
written, in the
the case.

villages where
n confessedly
has had its
rival, though,
bered by the
at which had
and popular
ny years ago,
week or more
nd the parish
y such multi-
nd. old—who
ns which fell
ing exhorta-
es than one.
al action that
asis of speech
acularly con-
, he fairly re-
nd, especially
spoken of in
yed with the
ch from them
ir and soul-

quickenings, which would certainly have been considered out of place during the even solemnity of an ordinary church service, and, indeed, on account of which the earnest evangelist's labours were at the time severely criticized, and even condemned. Yet thousands continued to attend his ministrations. His addresses, thickly interspersed as they were with heart-searching epigrams and sensational illustrations, were of the earnestness which secures, for the moment at least, the deepest conviction ; and, as such, naturally enough, excited many a poor conscience-stricken sinner to cry aloud in his anguish. Even the unconcerned—the critical and the sceptical—who went at first, perhaps not to scoff, but merely to hear and to see, possibly to find fault, often went away in tears and tribulation, while yet the spell of the preacher's words was upon them,—while yet the prophecies of unseen things which he portrayed in all the perspective of reality were ringing in their souls. "If there be a place of torment, there must be a heaven," is the thesis which so often makes it a heresy to deny the existence of the former ; and assuredly the evangelist of whom we speak was anything but a heretic in the eyes of those who had never doubted the existence of a place of torment ; for wrestling with the Evil One, and directing all his pulpit energy of mind and body against evil-doers, he seldom failed to convince even the most listless of his hearers that he himself, at least, honestly believed in the existence of a prepared hereafter for the wicked—an abode as hideously provided with the means of punishment as is "the local habitation and the place" fixed by the poetic imagery of Dante and Milton. In

a word, if Calvinism be the truth of it, the revivalist made sure that he had found the truth, and preached it with a vehemency and an earnestness that fixed the spell of the truth upon his hearers as long as the spell of his oratory was upon them, if not for some time after he had left the place.

"There's nae skim milk o' the gospel about that man's preaching," said Jeames, the church-officer, to Robin Drum, two gentlemen of whom we have already had some knowledge. Robin had waited upon his friend to accompany him part of the way home, after everything had been locked up about the church for the night.

"No, Mr. Drum ; there's the cream o' sound doctrine in ilka word he utters. Wi' him there's nae dilly-dallying wi' what some lukewarm Laodiceans ca' the naituralness o' human imperfection, by way o' justifying it ; nae caperin' wi' evil, because without it there can be nae guid ; but actually running at things wi' a red-hot poker, and burning the sma'est doubt out o' the unbelieving heart. Gie us preaching like that in a' our pulpits, and we would soon see the worl' takin' tent o' its ways to mend them. Exactly sae !"

"His poker is het enough, I'll allow," answered Robin ; "but that it is het enough to burn out a' our doubts, even the sma'est, as you say, is maybe a wee bit o' exaggeration on your part, Jeames. There are doubts and doubts, ye ken, though I can hardly suppose that you are ever troubled wi' the anes that the preacher tries to burn out wi' his poker."

"And what may the ither kind o' doubts be, if it be a fair question ?" asked Jeames.

"Weel, if it's no ower daring on my pairt to mention ane—a fundamental ane, as you yoursel' might ca' it—there's the doubt in our ain honesty. In ither words, are we aye right when we think we're right?"

"We're aye right, at ony rate, when we gang by the Book."

"Ay, that's maybe true; but then, ye ken, Jeames, the Book cannae aye a'thegither be brought in as a test," was Robin's reply. "For example, there's that bit difficulty o' mine about the psalm-tune. I thought I was right when I marched out o' the kirk; and yet now I see how kind o' ridiculous my conduct was, and even sometimes I'm inclined to think that I was wrang."

"Guidness me, Robin, you surely hae nae come to that."

"What for no? It surely never can be right to be wrang; and far less is it right no to confess we hae been wrang."

"I don't mean that," said Jeames. "I mean what you said about the Book no aye being a test o' our conduct. Wha, after hearing a sermon like that we hae just heard, can lose confidence in the power o' the Book and a' that it says?"

"I hae faith enough in the Book, as you very weel ken, Jeames. What I mean is, hae we faith in our faith—has our faith ony kind o' scientific bottom like?"

"Of course it has," answered Jeames eagerly, thus encouraged to deliver himself *ex cathedra*. "It not only has a scientific bottom, but it actually is the bottom itself o' everything we can form ony notion about. There's nae science in the worl' that hasnae to begin

wi' some self-evident truth—something that we cannae but believe in. Just look aboon your head for a minute, and ask yoursel' what the science o' astronomy would hae come to had the first astronomers no thought fit to start wi' a belief in the law o' gravitation and motion. And what is the law o' gravitation, I would like to ken, if it be nae a morsel o' the faith or the truth within us that matches wi' the truth about us? Just tak' a look at a' thae stars up there, and ye hae instantly to think o' the laws that govern them, and to believe in the Governor that hauds these laws in hand as the driver o' a horse hauds the reins. The worl', or rather the universe, is but a great and mighty system under the governance o' Ane, and that Ane is God. And what is our humanity if it be nae pairt of this system? And gin we find on record in a book sic as the Bible is, the fundamental principles o' sociology laid down a'most afore there was a humanity, or when it was but ill-matured—fundamentals that hae had the moulding o' the human into something the nearest like the divine, there's naething else for us but to gang back, in this case as in the tither, to find the source frae which they cam'—the same Governor o' the universe—enunciated as they hae been by Him through inspired humanity. Exactly sae!"

"Weel, weel, Jeames, I hae nae doubt you're sound enough on the beginning o' things," said Mr. Drum, "but what is your opinion about their hinder end! Do you think it 'ill be o' the nature o' a general stramash sic as the revivalist made out the night it is gaun to be. My very hair seemed to stand on end when he was describing the dissolution o' a' things and the

coming o' the King to judgment. It would surely be a pity to see sic a bonnie worl' as this o' ours destroyed in the manner he described."

"Pity here, or pity there!" exclaimed the sexton. "What does the Book say about the maitter?"

"The Book doesnae say much about it, as ye ken, except by way o' parable, or figurative statement."

"But that it will be destroyed, bonnie though it be, is a truth that naebody can doubt," Jeames continued. "The design o' everything proclaims the prophecy. You might as weel say because it is a pity to see a bonnie rose wither, nature should save it frae decay. As the hymn says, everything is a mere growth and decay; and like the rest o' things, the universe maun likewise come to an end. Indeed, as it seems to me, the Book gies nae uncertain sound about the end, whether it be by parable or itherwise."

"And will it be, think ye, as the preacher said, by the devouring element o' fire?"

"I hae nae doubt about the maitter; the Book says it will, and wha am I that I should for a minute doubt it?"

"But it's no' likely to be in our time, Jeames?"

"That's neither here nor there to us, Mr. Drum, as I often say to ither folk. The day o' our death is neither mair nor less than the Last Day, as far as we are concerned. Yet, to my mind, as I whiles say to mysel', it would be a blessed experience for some o' us, that hae grounded our faith on things everlasting, to be in the flesh when the trumpet sounds, and the last grand commotion amid things terrestrial tak's place. There hae been sects, and maybe they still

exist, that hae been kind o' positive in their notions about the Last Day, keeping watch day and night for its consummation. I only hope that folk'll hae a man like the evangelist to preach to them a month or twa afore the thing does tak' place. Even as it is, wha kens but he may be the messenger sent to us a', as a premonitor o' some great calamity."

"Eh, what's that ye say, Jeames?" exclaimed Robin. "Do you mean onything by-ordinar' in saying that?"

"Weel, I'm no very sure mysel' what I mean or dinnae mean," answered Jeames. "The words really cam' into my mouth afore I kenned what I was about to say. But I hae been lately reading in the papers about the coming o' a comet that'll approach, if a' tales be true, near enough the earth's orbit for either o' their safety. And should it only happen to meet the earth on its way across space, there might be some kind o' a stramash, as ye ca' it. It's tail, they say, is millions o' miles lang, and even should we escape the terrible bump o' instant collision between it's head and our bit planet, its tail may gie us a slap that'll no be guid for us, and maybe set a' things ableeze."

"And when is sic a monster to turn up?" asked Robin Drum with a voice that indicated some excitement. "Will we hae ony chance o' seeing it wi' the naked e'e?"

"That we will," said the sexton, "at least, the newspapers say so; and I was jist speaking to the school-master about it the tither night, and he said to me that he had been thinking about gicin' a lecture on the subject in the Mechanics' Hall. He said further to me, that the fiery tail o't would appear quite distinct

in the heavens in a night or twa, as soon as the monster, as ye hae thought fit to ca' the thing, got its head aboon our horizon. And when I asked him if there was ony likelihood o' its making trouble for us, he shook his head in a kind o' a doubtful way, that wasnae by ony means reassuring. But we'll ken a' about it soon enough for our comfort maybe. The schoolmaster thinks he may hae his lecture ready by next week, or the week after, and intends to deliver it after the excitement ower the revivalist and his preaching has kind o' abated; for, as he says, it would be utterly impossible for ony local lecturer to draw an audience thegither while the town's people keep flocking to the parish kirk every night, as they continue to dae."

"But wouldnae the very subject draw o' itsel'?"

"The subject is kittle enough for him to tackle at ony rate."

"Weel, if I were him I wouldnae delay. He neednae be fear't about no haein' a house. The people'll flock to hear him in as big crowds as to the revivalist's services. If I were you, Jeames, I would advise him to gie us the lecture this week if he can get his maitter ready; but I maun be aff on my road hame."

By this time Jeames and Robin Drum had reached the entrance to the narrow lane that leads to the district in Kartdale, known to the present day as Miner's Brae. As Robin seemed to have made up his mind to take the lane as a short-cut to the street beyond, where he lived, Jeames and he had continued the latter part of their crack at the street corner where Miner's Brae left the main thoroughfare of the town. There they had co:re

to the part of their conversation about the comet, and before they parted, notwithstanding Robin's inclination to be at home, Jeames had to tell in what newspaper he had read about the coming heavenly visitant, and give a kind of verbatim report of the editor's remarks on the subject; and so engrossed were they in the discussion, that neither of them gave much heed to their surroundings, nor noticed two boys who were seemingly loitering near the opposite corner of the street, but who were actually drinking in every word the sexton was saying about the monster with the fiery tail that was in all likelihood to do a damage to the world.

"Guid night to you, Jeames," at last said Robin Drum. "Dark though it has become, for I see the clouds hae gathered while we hae been standing talking in the lamplight here, I think I'll tak' the Brae for it. Things are greatly changed on the Brae since this revival began, and a man need hae less fear than he used to hae, in passing down the lane, even at eleven o'clock in a dark night like this. My, how dark it looks down there!"

"Guid night, Mr. Drum," answered Jeames; "it's dark enough, gin you happen to mention it, and you'll hae to tak' guid care o' your footing. I'll maybe tak' a dauner down to your place the morn's afternoon, and let ye ken what the schoolmaster thinks o' your suggestion about that lecture o' his. Guid night to you."

And thus the two friends parted company.

et, and
nation
spaper
nt, and
emarks
in the
eed to
o were
of the
y word
he fiery
to the

Robin
see the
ng talk-
Brae for
nce this
than he
t eleven
dark it
es; "it's
d you'll
ybe tak'
oon, and
our sug-
to you."

CHAPTER II.

Brave you say ; I'm glad to hear it,
But what is that behind your chair ?
What is that ! my conscience, what is't ?
Oh nothing, nothing, but beware.

Miner's Brae was by far the most thickly-populated quarter in the town of Kartdale. It was the abode of the very poor of the place ; and as huddling poverty is too often associated with ignorance and vice, either as its cause or effect, the people who lived on and around Miner's Brae were neither very intelligent nor very moral. The district had received its name when an influx of population was experienced in Kartdale, after Lord Clay had sold to the wealthy iron-master of Frampton Hall the right to open up the rich veins of coal and iron on his estate, in the centre of which the town was situated.

The working of these mines had given employment to a very large number of workmen, who made their home in the large straggling tenements that had been hurriedly erected for their accommodation. The mineral wealth, however, had not proved so extensive as had been at first expected. The measures were all but exhausted after a few years, causing the great majority of the miners to move elsewhere in quest of a

livelihood ; and when, in the course of time, Kartdale prospered in its other commercial enterprises, and its streets began to be improved in the character of the buildings in the older parts of the town, the poorer people took up their abode in the tenements erected for the accommodation of the workmen in the mines. But the low moral tone which the latter had brought with them to the district, seemed to cling to the Brae, even when the most of the miners had taken their departure ; its bad name, at least, continued to be a proverb in the place. It is true an attempt had been made by the associated ministers of the various churches to establish a sort of mission-house or church in the lane which intersected the Brae, but the efforts to evangelize became more or less intermittent after the novelty of the inception had worn off ; and the hall had not unfrequently to remain closed all week for want of an audience.

The coming of the popular revivalist from the north, however, had caused something of an awakening among the more respectable of the inhabitants of Miner's Brae, and had even extended to one or two of the worst characters in the locality. Many of these, who had never been in the parish church before the coming of the revivalist, nor perhaps in any other place of worship, unless it were the mission church, became regular attendants on the ministrations of the itinerant preacher, and where formerly only profanity and ribaldry had disturbed the solemnity of night, there could be heard even after the first week of his labours, the singing of hymns and the occasional agony of prayer from the lips of some poor convicted soul.

Kartdale
es, and its
ter of the
he poorer
its erected
the mines.
d brought
o the Brae,
n their de-
d to be a
t had been
he various
e or church
the efforts
mittent after
ff; and the
ed all week

in the north,
awakening
habitants of
one or two
any of these,
h before the
n any other
sion church,
ations of the
nly profanity
ity of night,
t week of his
asional agony
victed soul.

It was down the lane which intersected Miner's Brae that Robin Drum had to pass on his way home, after parting with his friend Jeames. As has been said, a pitchy darkness had settled upon the town. Going down the Brae was like going down into hidden depths; and Robin, after proceeding a few paces from the lamp-lit corner into the darkness, touching the walls of the houses to feel his way, began to realize that there were footsteps behind him as if two people were following him. His experiences during the evening had not been such as to fortify his nervous system, and as he groped on his way he began to think that perhaps it would have been better for him if he had taken the round-about road after all. Yet what was there to fear?

It was safe enough for him to be on the Brae even at that late hour. Things were not as they had been. A change had come over the more quarrelsome of the people. And yet there might be left among the regenerate, a black sheep or two who would do a harmful thing to a man on a dark night. There could be no doubt that some folk were following him—and seemingly uncanny folk too, for when he stopped on his way, the footsteps behind him likewise stopped. Who could it be, and how was he to find out? Would it not be well for him to take to his heels? But his imagination began to fill the darkness before him with countless dangers. Better for him to fall into the hands of footpads than to break his neck over some doorstep or other. But were they really enemies that were behind him? They did not seem inclined to make immediate attack. Then, as an experiment, he

braced himself up for an instant against the nearest house, thinking to let his pursuers pass him in the dark, but no sooner had he assumed his silent position than the footsteps behind him ceased, and there was nothing but silence all around. Whoever they were, they could not be far away at anyrate, and if he could only be patient and keep his heart from louping out of his mouth, as he said to himself, something might happen to his advantage. They certainly did not mean to seize him near the houses in the lane, or he would have been caught by them as soon as he had reached the thick darkness. And so he waited—waited patiently but tremulously—waited until the silence became painful, and the rigidity, in which he had to keep his body pressed against the wall, became physically irksome.

At last a rustling was heard behind him and a whispering. Did these sounds convey the premonition of instant violence? Was it not just as likely as not that the persons following were as afraid as he was? Could it be possible that he was in no bodily danger? Was it only his imagination that was tricking him? Cowardice! Why, who was a coward? Not he, anyway. At least Robin made an effort to reassure himself that such was not the case. The Brae was not such a bad place. There never had been any serious occurrence that he had heard of except in connection with some quarrel. There once had lived in this same street body-snatchers, but that was a long time ago. Then he thought of having caught a glimpse of two boys while Jeames and he had been having their crack at the street corner. Was it possible, after all, that they

were his pursuers? Well, upon my word! Dear me! Let us try, anyway.

"Hist!" he cried; "wha's there?"

But the only reply he received was a repetition of the rustling and a half-frightened kind of a laugh.

"Wha's there?" he again asked. "You neednae be afraid o' me," for he now felt all but convinced that it was only the two boys who were in the darkness behind; "come here and tell me wha you are."

"Oh, Mr. Drum!" was all that the boys could say as they approached him; "it's us, Mr. Drum."

"It's you, is it? And wha are you, pray? It's a fine time o' the night for boys like you to be out o' the house. What are your names?"

The boys instantly gave their names, and one can readily imagine Mr. Drum's surprise, after his fright, to find that he had been afraid of two members of his Sunday-school class, which he had regularly conducted in the mission church in its better days.

"Guidness me! What a trickster the imagination o' man is!" thought Robin to himself as the two lads began to tell him why they were out so late.

They had just returned, as they told him, from conveying home another boy, a companion of theirs, who lived in another part of the town. The three of them had been at the revival services, and were hardly in a fit frame of mind to pass with temerity into the darkness of the lane all by themselves. They had run all the way from Dimity Tenement, and were glad to find Mr. Drum at the street corner on their return, being content enough to wait until he had finished his talk with the sexton.

"And so, laddies, you were at the parish kirk the night," said Mr. Drum, when he and the boys had moved on a pace or two in silence after explanations had been made. "Were you able to get seats?"

"Oh no, Mr. Drum," answered the elder of the boys, "the crowd was somethin' terr'l; we could hardly get in, and were willin' enough to stand a' the time."

"And did ye mind what the minister was saying?"

"Oh ay; but there was a woman that fainted."

"And Sandy Allison near fainted tae," cried the younger lad.

"And Auld Peter cried out as if he had been sticket."

"Maybe he was," said Robin, "in the soul pairt o' him."

Then the boys began to rival one another in their narrations of the incidents during the service, until their companion thought fit to interfere, and by questioning them, find out what they really had learned from the evangelist,—to draw out of them their own experiences. But the boys remained rather reticent in this direction, and merely remarked that they had been very much frightened at what he had said about the "bad place," as they called it, whereupon Mr. Drum assured them that only evil-doers need be afraid of the place of eternal woe.

"And, I'm sure, laddies, you're no' o' that kind; at least you were aye attentive enough when you ga'ed to school to me."

But the boys were modestly silent on their own perfections. They were not in the way of entering upon

the confessional. At last, after a short pause, the elder of them asked their guide and quondam Sunday-school teacher, after the usual abrupt manner of boys :—

"Please, Mr. Drum, what is a comet?"

"A comet!" exclaimed Robin, in surprise, for he did not think for a moment that the boys had heard much of his conversation with Jeames; "a comet, laddie! What puts a comet in your head?"

"But it's no onythin' in his head, Mr. Drum," said the younger boy. "It's somethin' in the sky."

"Something in the sky?"

"Ay, somethin' wi' a fiery tail."

"A kind o' monster star," said the elder boy.

"That's to burn up the worl'," exclaimed both of them.

"And wha was it that tell't you about this monster wi' the fiery tail that is to destroy the worl'?" asked Robin.

"Oh, we only heard you and Jeames, the sexton, talkin' about it at the street corner up there," said they, falteringly.

And thus it came about that Mr. Drum had to explain, as well as his own limited knowledge would permit him, what the comet was and the manner in which it was expected to appear.

"But will it really and truly burn up the worl'?" again asked the elder boy.

"Maybe it may, and maybe it winnae," was Robin's non-committal reply. "It's no for us to say what will happen or what'll no happen in this worl', my laddie."

The boys were silent for a minute.

Then the younger, with great hesitancy and stum-

blin' uired if the coming of the comet would be
th ast Day."

course it will, gin the comet strike the worl'."

"And will we see the comet afore the trumpet sounds?"

"They that hae been watching for it, say that we'll see it mony a day afore it can do us ony harm; but the schoolmaister, they say, is gaun to explain a' about it in a lecture he expects to gie, and then we'll understand mair explicitly about the danger there'll be to us a'. It's aye weel, however, my laddies, to be prepared for the warst, and let us pray earnestly to Him that rules a' things, to tak' us under His protection whatever may happen."

After this the boys had little more to say; indeed they were too frightened to say anything further. So frightened were they that Mr. Drum had to go a little out of his way to see them to the door of the little thatched house which was their home.

And, as was to be expected, there were soon few of the inhabitants of Miner's Brae that had not heard of the comet and the destruction it was likely to bring in its wake. Indeed, the story of the coming of the comet was but a complement to the revival excitement; for before the week was out, those who happened to converse about the one, were soon found discussing the "pros and cons" of the other. Even in the more intelligent circles of the town the interest taken in both subjects was paramount; while in a district like Miner's Brae the excitement was engrossing, continuous, and even serious.

would be

worl'."

trumpet

that we'll

n; but the

a' about

e'll under-

l be to us

prepared

Him that

ion what-

y; indeed

ther. So

go a little

the little

on few of

t heard of

p bring in

g of the

al excite-

happened

discussing

the more

en in both

strict like

ing, con-

CHAPTER III.

The bad would be worse for the applause of their fellows,
Proud is their strut gin danger be hidden,
Their brag is the blast of a wind-bag and bellows,
Their crawl is as crouse as the king's of the midden.

But Kartdale after all was only an ordinary place, disturbed very much in the same way as other places, and seeking for explanations and relief from fear as our towns and villages are ever accustomed to do in their moments of excitement. There are usually three classes to be met with under such circumstances: those who claim the privilege of criticizing loftily until the danger becomes imminent, when they fling aside their weapons and run with the vulgus; those who see the hand of God in all occurrences, and approach an investigation of them while ridding their feet in the most solemn manner of the shoes of self-sufficiency, as they would say; and those who make of their ignorance a vantage ground, from which they may deride passing events. Under the influence of the last class there is little chance of any public question escaping the ordeal of ridicule. Some say that this treatment of public affairs is a way the world has of defending itself; and possibly it may, but it is an offence all the same, and strange to say, however often a community

may be convicted of the offence, it seldom or never pleads guilty, but perseveres in the habit of ridiculing what it should uphold, even in the face of recurring punishment from the editor or the historian. The conscience of communities seldom knows remorse for long. Even when the laugh that is blighting is not meant to be cruel, it always claims to be the *vox populi*, having for its effect oftentimes the setting aside of suggestions, which could not but advance the common weal, if properly carried out. Nor is the temerity of this spirit of ridicule limited. In every community there is more or less compound ignorance, the ignorance of ignorance, the ignorance that deems itself the only intelligence; and the raillery born of it is too often to be heard in the discussions about religious matters, or the questions that fringe on them. The man who is always openly discussing religious topics may often be anything but a good man, may not even be a religious man, yet he may be far from being a hypocrite or a bad man. But who has a good word to say of the man who laughs at the religious seriousness of others? There is only one step further for such a ribald to take, in order to reach the ground swell of humanity; and for his own good, as most would say, he had better take it, disappear from his present environment,—find a new world wherein he may reform, or seek association in the hells of time or the hades of eternity.

In the district of Miner's Brae there were to be found not a few of these ribalds—men ignorant, vicious, and presuming in their own grade of society. These were the devils of the locality, men who had

been known to fear and tremble, and yet who continued to swear, and jeer, and laugh, either for the purpose of putting their fear to flight or of hiding it from their neighbours. Yet of depravity there are lower grades, and of the depraved of Miner's Brae there was none more depraved than a poor wretch who lived near the middle of the Brae, in one of the tenements formerly occupied by the workmen of Lord Clay's mines. This poor creature was known to everyone in the place by the sobriquet of Souple Tam—a title conferred upon him, as it was said, from the fact that when half overcome with liquor, he always seemed to become all but jointless in his limbs. His own name was Thomas Reid. From early years he had known nothing but poverty, the decent poverty at first that alcohol at last makes abject. At the time of which this is written he was about fifty years of age,—the leader of everything that was vile, a wretch that was seemingly totally depraved, a corrupter of the young men and boys of Miner's Brae. For in reality, in his latter capacity, his depravity seemed to find its function; with the youth of the place he laughed, and by them was laughed at. With them he swore and drank, whenever an occasion occurred, committing with them every offence against morality that was not actually criminal.

As was to be expected, the labors of the revivalist formed a convenient theme for Reid's ribaldry, whenever it was possible for him to collect a coterie of young men around him. One evening—the evening after Jeames and Robin Drum had had their first discussion about the comet—a band of Reid's own tutor-

ing were to be seen collected at the common entrance or "close mouth" of one of the largest tenements in the street, shouting to those who happened to be passing, and asking them if they had seen the "unco guid" with the revivalist at their head riding past on the comet's tail, or some such nonsense. Reid was in the midst of them, his dissipated aspect forming something of a contrast to the younger faces around him, while every now and again a shout of laughter would greet some of his coarse sallies.

"Hae ye heard about Sandy Allison, Tam?" asked some one during a pause in the merriment. If the reader remembers, Sandy Allison was the man whom the boys had told Robin Drum of, as having been visibly affected by the ministrations of the evangelist the night before.

"They tell me he's converted," was Reid's reply. "Dear me, what will auld Sanny think o' losing sic a rich morsel as his namesake after all?"

"Ay, and speak o' the deil and he appears," shouted another of the crowd. "There is Sandy himself coming up the street."

The laughter and noise at the "close mouth" gave the man they referred to warning as to what sort of a crowd he was about to encounter, and, to escape, he made to pass to the other side of the street. But Souple Tam was bound not to let him escape.

"Hallo, Sandy Allison," he cried, "can it really be possible that you would try to forget your frien's?"

The poor man did not know very well what he should do, and his seeming irresolution made those

behind Reid nudge one another, as if there was the prospect of some fun before them.

After a minute's pause the man decided to keep on his own side of the street, making to pass the crowd with a simple nod of recognition.

"Dear me," said Reid to him, "how things are changed wi' ye a' at ance, Sandy, my man. You've got on your best claes, tae. Are ye dressed for a waddin'?"

The man was thus obliged to face Reid. "No," said he, in a simple way, with his eyes on the ground; "I'm no gaun to a waddin', but I wish you were gaun whaur I am gaun, a' the same, Thomas Reid."

"Is there to be onything to drink at the pairty?" and the laugh Reid fully expected followed from the crowd.

"Yes, you may come wi' me, if you like, and drink frae the fountain that's aye open for sic as you and me. You had better come, and bring your frien's wi' you."

"But wha is it that's to pay the lawin'?"

"The Lord Himsel' surely will," answered Sandy, modestly and honestly enough.

Reid turned to the crowd, for he was hardly ready with a retort to such words, and asked them, with a shrug of his shouiders, if they would not like to go to Sandy Allison's pairty. "It's no aye we'll hae the chance o' a free drink, my canty chieles, nae maitter how weak the stuff may be. What think ye, will we gang?"

Some of the crowd answered one thing, and some of them another, all being equally profane.

Then Reid turned to Sandy, with a mock air of sol-

emnity, and put another query—"Come, now, Sandy, tell us true, are you really converted?"

"That's maybe neither here nor there to you, Thomas Reid," was the reply. "The question for you to ask is, are you and your frien's putting yoursel's in the way o' bein' converted. Sae, if you'll no gang wi' me, I maun e'en gang by mysel'; ye'll hae anither chance, the morn's night, in the mission kirk."

"The mission kirk?" exclaimed some of the others.

"Ay, it's to be opened the morn's night."

"And are you to preach, Sandy?" asked Souple Tam, laughing at his own question as an encouragement to his followers to do the same.

But making no reply to the query, Sandy only turned away from them, as if to go his own way.

"This free drinking of yours, Sandy, I'm afeart, is makin' you unco proud, and bein' proud wi' your ain frien's is no very far frae bein' a sin, as I'm thinking. Ye had better join the tee-total like me, auld man, and choose your company. But, I say, Sandy, honest sodger, wha is it that's gaun to preach in the mission kirk the morn's night?"

"The revivalist is gaun to preach," answered Sandy.

"Then, I think, we had a' better gang," said Reid.

"As for me, I'll be near enough onyway to my ain bed, gin I get fou at sic a fountain as Sandy here speaks o'. Guid-bye to you, Sandy Allison, the man I really thought was my frien'. Guid-bye," and the ribald threw a quaver in his voice as of grief at Sandy's departure, and rubbed his great coarse red eyes with his hands. "I'll no be like to see you again in this worl'. You used to be friendly enough wi' us a' until you took to

this drinking. But, never mind, Sandy, the pairtin' is no for lang ; for it'll be a' up wi' the rest o' us this week or the next, onyway, for the comet is coming."

But Souple Tam was not to escape so easily, even at his own game, for not long after Sandy Allison had left, there lounged into the crowd a young man whom everyone present seemed glad to see, with the exception, perhaps, of the leader of the audience himself.

"Hallo, Johnnie, is that you?" was Reid's form of welcome to the newcomer, holding out his hand to him.

"Aye, it's me, unless you happen, as usual, to be blin' drunk and dreaming, Tam," was the reply. "Are you gaun to the lecture the morn's night ony o' you?"

But none of them seemed to know anything more about the lecture than they had a few minutes before known about the opening of the mission kirk.

"I'm bookit already, Johnnie," said Reid.

"And wha has bookit you at last, Tam, if it be a fair question? Guidness me, the woman that marries you, Souple, will hae her hands fu' twice ower. But maybe that's no' what you mean. Are you no gaun to the lecture? That's the question."

"I'm gaun if it's to be in the mission kirk," said Tam.

"But it's no to be in the mission kirk ; why, the mission kirk hasnae been open for this mony a day. The lecture is to be in the Mechanics' Hall."

"Then I'm no gaun, that's certain ; for I'm bespoke, and sae are the rest o' us, for the mission kirk. But wha's gaun to lecture?"

"The dominie is."

"What on?"

"On the comet and the end o' the worl'."

"The comet, say ye; weel, there's no muckle to pick and choose atween them after a'," and Reid looked as if he had put on his considering cap.

"Atween what?"

"Atween the lecture and the sermon—the sermon that's to be delivered in the mission kirk the morn's night!" and Tam proceeded to tell him about Sandy Allison and his announcement.

"But how is there, Souple, no muckle to pick and choose atween them?"

"Weel, as it seems to me the smell o' sulphur is mair than likely to be in baith places," and Reid had his reward in the renewed laughter.

"Then, gin I were you, Tam, I would gang to the sermon."

"How's that?"

"Because there the smell 'ill be strongest; and you ken, Souple, you aye like the best o' everything."

The repartee, however, did not subdue Reid.

"Maybe you'll gang wi' me," said he, "if it be for naething else than to haud my nose like?"

"Na, na, Tam, I'll be nae man's flunkey, far less yours; besides, I would be sure to get my fingers burned."

The tables were now turned on the ribald; nevertheless, he was far from being silenced.

"There'll maybe be mair than your fingers in danger o' being burned ere lang," he said, as soon as the noise and laughter would let him. "The comet is coming, Johnnie, my man."

"Weel, Tam, if I promise to haud your nose the morn's night, maybe you'll haud the comet by the tail when it comes until I can escape to Glasgow, and thus rin rid o' the danger. But danger or no danger, if I were you, Souple, I would keep the house for a week or twa until the comet has really come. For what wi' your nose and the noise it whiles mak's, folk might think when they meet you o' a dark night that the comet had come afore its time, bringing the crack o' doom with it."

"The craw is no aye the bravest bird," cried Reid, with the laugh now fairly against him.

"Nor would a caunle be the brightest light at this close mouth gin we had ane."

"But a caunle is no the comet ; let us hear what you think about the comet. It'll certainly gie us light enough on our way to Auld Nick's menagerie."

"Then you're no gaun either to the lecture or the sermon after a'," said the tormentor, determined to have the last word. "As for me, I'm for nane o' your wild beast shows ; sae, guid-night to you, Souple ; take care o' the beasts, and see you dinnae turn into ane o' them yoursel', or a's done. Guid-night to you, callans."

CHAPTER IV.

A soul-storm whirls within its whistling woe
A dirge of other days. Athwart its gloom
And retrospect, convictions gleam and glance,
Around the ruins of the crack of doom.

The arrangement that the revivalist should hold a service in the mission kirk, had induced the school-master to take advantage of the pause in his ministrations in the parish church, to deliver the promised lecture on the comet in the Mechanics' Hall. To hear the evangelist, it is needless to say that the mission house was crowded to its utmost capacity by the denizens of Miner's Brae. Such a meeting was an unusual thing in that district ; and those who had the welfare of the community at heart were not slow to prophesy the best results from the effort. In the audience were stationed here and there some of the leading religious philanthropists of the town—the elders in great part of the various churches—present, no doubt, to guide the proprieties ; and yet there was hardly any need for the precaution, the expectancy in the eyes of the audience being a sufficient guarantee that order was likely to prevail during the service.

The evangelist orator took for his text, "But they who believe not shall be damned," and, before long, after a few introductory remarks, he proceeded to paint

in such vivid colours the after condition of those who had neglected their opportunities in this life, that the men and women before him began to cry out in the most intense agony.

"Ay," said he, "the devils in hell are said to fear and tremble, and so may you; for what are ye but heathen in the midst of civilization, the lost in the sight of salvation. God is good, but what favour can He show to such as you who continue to live in your sins and wallow in the slime of your iniquity. Living, like the prodigal, amid the husks of your own lusts, is there even the desire in your heart to return to the warmth and compassion of a Father's love? But for His mercy, and the intercession of His crucified Son, He would have swept you all into perdition, there to live with the devil and his angels for ever and ever, there to simmer in the eternal pains of the fire that never shall be quenched, companions of the worm that dieth not; and yet to-day you are still in the land of the living. But is it to you a place of hope? You cry out in your anguish, but what is there in that cry that shall not be in the cry ten thousandfold which you will utter when you pass to the world in which no cry for mercy is ever heard. Then shall hell's laughter ring in your ears, as you cry for the drop of cold water to cool your parched tongues. How merciful God is, that He has thus spared you, and yet spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all."

"Soon there will pass," he continued, "within the sphere of this planetary system of ours, a mighty emblem of God's majesty and power, which may bear in its wake the destruction of all that is mundane. In a

moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the sound of God's judgment may reverberate in our ears ; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye this great universe of ours may be shrivelled up like a scroll and melt like wax ; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, your sins in the agony of your dissolution may crowd around you, even worse than they are doing now, and stifle you with their remorseful clutch, hurling you hence into the horrible pit of death and eternal torment. Ay, cry aloud, for your danger is imminent ! Cry aloud and rend your hair, for the judgment of God is at hand ! Gnash your teeth in your anguish and deceive yourselves no longer. God is not to be mocked. Ere another week is gone the end may come, and well may we ask what shall be the end of these things."

The scene which followed such invective, was something which had never been witnessed in Kartdale before, and when the morning came there was in its sunlight a relief to many a throbbing heart, that yet another day had been given the world to repent of its sins. The terror in its acuteness had somewhat subsided, it is true ; but when the sun began its western way, and the afternoon lengthened into the evening, and the twilight deepened into darkness, the restlessness of Miner's Brae was again almost as noticeable as it had been the night before, after the revivalist had dismissed his audience.

Nor were the opinions of the schoolmaster, as expressed in his lecture on the solar system and the eccentricities of comets in general, as reported in the ears of the more ignorant, calculated to allay the excitement aroused by the efforts of the evangelist.

"I know," said he, "that the prominent desire in the most of our minds at the present moment is to know what effect this phenomenon will have upon our own sphere. When Halley's comet appeared in 1456, there was aroused in many men's minds the fear that it was but the portent of some great calamity about to fall upon the earth. From the discoveries of science we have every reason to believe that these fears were utterly groundless. The danger of collision, in this instance, also lies within the probabilities which render our safety all but certain. And yet, we as Christian men and women must recognize this wondrous heavenly body as an instrument in God's hand as much as is the earth itself,—an instrument with which to work out His own designs. What is evil to us is but a part of the system under which He rules and governs His system, and should it seem good in His sight that this great world system of His should be benefited by the destruction of any part of it, we have but to say, 'Thou, O Lord, art good, and wise, and omnipotent; we, Thy humble servants, are in Thine hand; do to Thy servants whatever may appear good in Thy sight.'"

After a day or two the anxiety in Miner's Brae seemed to further subside. The outside world, in the other parts of the town, went its way as usual. The marrying and giving in marriage among the sons of men continued, and all the wheels of busy life knew no stay in their motion, just as will be the case, according to Holy Writ, in the times before the end of all time comes. The revivalist departed to other scenes, and even the approach of the comet seemed to be for-

gotten ; at least the inhabitants of Miner's Brae showed less and less inclination to talk very much about it. The ribaldry of such loose characters as Thomas Reid was no longer in favour when men met at the street corners. Reid himself was thought to be much more sedate after attending the mission church on the evening when the revivalist had preached his sermon ; and though he said nothing about it to anyone, the change was not unobserved by the young men with whom he was still on the most familiar terms. "God grant that he may come to see the error of his ways," was all that some of the more respectable people of the Brae said about him, however.

The mission church was kept open for more than a week after the revivalist had left. Robin Drum was anxious that the after-wave of the revival should be prolonged as far as he and a few others of the laity could sustain it in its progress. There were many still anxious. Some had actually, like Sandy Allison, turned from their former ways. Others longed to do so, were only the strength given to them ; and both of these classes continued to attend the services in the mission church. Even those who did not care to be seen very often in the little church, were haunted with the words of the revivalist ; and thus, though the anxiety had disappeared as a public excitement, it was none the less being felt in private as a personal experience to most of the people, when an incident occurred which suddenly developed it to the fever point of a panic.

A full fortnight had elapsed since the schoolmaster had lectured. In his exposition he had not definitely

declared the exact day when the stranger-star would appear above the horizon of Kartdale ; yet the notion was abroad, among the youthful and the ignorant at least, that it would be seen actually approaching the earth in about two weeks' time ; and thus it was that the terrible scene which took place on and near the lane, on the Thursday fortnight after the revivalist's departure, and which brings this narrative to an end, indicated in an ominous way to those who shared in the panic, the fulness of time.

At midnight all was still on Miner's Brae. Sleep and darkness had fallen upon the town. Not a light was visible in the lane to indicate with its feeble rays the intensity of the blackness of the hour. Mortality had truly fallen into the hollow of God's hand for unconscious safe keeping. The wise man had prayed to Him for protection, and had fallen asleep in the shadow of the protection, which is ever vouchsafed to those who have faith in their faith. The foolish had trimmed the flickering lamp of their nonchalance, and so had fallen asleep in the expectation of the day that might never come. The depraved, with a hope born of despair, had restlessly struggled into that condition of rest in which the conscience ever fights for expression in dreams, unless the early struggles for sleep have been avoided by some narcotic or other,—some physical exaltation or depression that debases both soul and body.

Of the wise—if the Pharisaism that plumes itself in daylight be not wisdom—there were few in Miner's Brae ; while of the foolish and depraved there were enough and to spare. Yet all slumbered and slept.

All ? Oh, no, not all. Remorse does not flee from such darkness as hung over Miner's Brae that night. Silence had fallen upon it—the silence of sleep and darkness, but remorse had to gnaw somewhere, even if the gnawing was to be observed but by one—the poor wretch in whose heart conviction was busy at work.

And this poor wretch in whose heart remorse had found a retreat, was no other than Thomas Reid. He had gone to bed ; but there was to be no sleep for him that night. Nothing, it is true, as he kept muttering to himself, had happened during the day to disturb him in any special way. He had done an honest day's work at the gas-work, where he was always sure of employment when he kept sober. Indeed, he had been working steadily for more than a fortnight past, and had not touched a drop of drink since the night the revivalist held his service in the mission hall. Yet, there he lay in all the agony of remorse and deep despair.

"O God," he cried, "not fairly midnight yet ; and yet anither day I may never see. There is nae hope for sic as me, nae hope in the next worl' or even in this, should it last. A life misspent, a soul lost ! Oh, my God, it is simply horrible to think o' ! The preacher talked o' the worm that dieth not ; and yet it was only in me to revile sic things no lang since, laughin' ower them wi' thae bits o' boys that were keen enough to join me in my profanity. How can God look upon me as ither than a disgrace to His handiwork, that maun gang to the furnace ? Mercy me, how my head burns !"

Then, after a moment's tossing about, he began to

lash himself with the satire with which he had so often made a laughing-stock of religion. "Fules, like everything else, hae their season, and you hae had yours, Tam Reid; and a bigger fule there never was born. Just to think o' a man o' your time o' life finding your fame amang a wheen o' boys—a man grown amang weans—and ane o' them fit to handle ye, tae. How bonnie a sight it maun be to the redeemed, aye, and to my ain mither amang the redeemed! What's that? To my ain mither? Ay, my ain mither—the puir woman whase heart I broke," and the poor wretch fairly trembled in his agony, and gnashed his teeth at himself.

"Pray to God! ye say; but what difference will that mak'? Will God listen to sic a wretch as me? But even if He would, whaur's the hope? I'm lost, I tell ye, I'm lost, lost, lost forever."

Then he got up and tried to pray, kneeling by his bedside, in his anguish of spirit.

But, alas, what prayer was there to come from such foul lips as his that would not sound like profanity? What prayer could he remember to utter? His mouth was parched—his brain seemed on fire—and again he shouted, "I'm lost, lost for ever."

Just then the clock in the tower of the parish church began to strike the hour of midnight.

"One—two—three—four!" and he paused to count them.

"Five—six—seven—eight!" and the respite from the contemplation of his soul's affairs seemed to him like a prayer in itself.

"Nine—ten—eleven—twelve—"

"O God," he exclaimed, rising to his feet, with his hands to his head, "what is that?"

A terrible reverberation had shaken every timber in the tenement in which he lived, and in a minute he had crawled to the window of his room.

Then there came another crash, and the falling of glass. Had the comet come—the comet about which he had laughed so much? Trembling like a man shaken with the palsy, he threw up the under sash of his window, and looked out.

Through the darkness there came the sound of others opening their windows, with the wailing of children and women. Then followed another earthquake sound, as intense as those that had dragged Thomas Reid to his window; and the whole heavens beyond the tops of the houses of Miner's Brae were seen from where he stood to become illuminated with a light that increased in intensity.

"It is the comet!" shouted Reid, hardly knowing what he said in his madness. "It is the comet! It is the comet!" and he rushed to the street, followed by others of the tenement in which he lived.

"There it is!" shouted the madman still more wildly, as another crash came, and as the inhabitants of the Brae found their way to the street.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" arose the cry from every lip, and, for answer, there came the agonizing shout of Reid, as he rushed up the lane—

"The comet has come! The comet has come!"

The uproar now knew no bounds. The light beyond the houses verified the reverberations that still shook the air all around, and the cry, "The comet has come!"

was heard everywhere. Men, women, and children, half-naked as they were, rushed hither and thither shivering in the midnight cold ; sometimes crowding round one another, and marvelling at the intermittent din and the increasing light in the heavens—shrieking, moaning, praying—a sad, sad spectacle. Alas ! what a meeting that was in the narrow, crowded lane of Miner's Brae there—what a meeting together of all the superstitious weaknesses and remorseful woes that ever congregate within the abodes of ignorance and vice. Alas ! what a crowding together there was of men, women and children, wringing their hands, tearing their hair—ay, cursing themselves as they stood face to face with imminent destruction.

At last an explanation came. Time to the agonized becomes an eternity ; and though the panic had not lasted more than four or five minutes, the period of distress seemed an age. And yet, though perhaps their after-conduct was natural enough, the poor people hardly took time to hear the explanation in full ; for as soon as Robin Drum had appeared upon the scene, and they had heard from him that it was not the comet at all, and that there was no danger, it was almost impossible for him to hold an audience for a full statement of the facts.

"Man," said he to his friend the sexton, when he was telling him the story next day, "they ran frae me, Jeames, as if I had been the cause o' the turmoil ; for nae sooner had I tell't them about the firing o' the guns that had made me get up and put on my claes to see what the din was a' about, than they fled like a when rattens to their holes. Yet, I think, could they only get

haud o' the young men that were gaun round the town to celebrate, with as muckle noise as possible, the waddin' o' their maister's son, or the ithers that had started the big bonfire, they would feel like lynching them. As for Souple Tam, he'll no be likely to be seen in Miner's Brae for lang. After everything was quiet, I cam' in contact with him at his close-mouth. The puir sinner was in an awfu' plight. Sae I gaed up to his room with him, and lighting his caunle, saw him to bed. I had a lang conversation wi' him about his soul's concern, and I think we may now expect better things o' him. But he'll hae to leave Miner's Brae for a' that."

THE TRUTH O'T.

CHAPTER I.

There's a spot on your teeth, auld wife, auld wife,
And some 'ill ca' it a lie, maybe ;
Sae rinse out your mouth, and rub ilka tooth,
Nor run ye the risk o' a lie, auld wife,
Risk nae the look o' a lie.

The sermon, as nearly everybody present had afterwards to acknowledge, was a good, sound, practical discourse. Indeed, Robin Drum, who had seldom if ever been blamed for lack of caution in arriving at an opinion, went so far as to declare to Jeames in the session-house, when the congregation had dispersed, that there could possibly be no two ways of thinking about the matter. The old minister, with the matured flavour of years in his eloquence like the bloom on a rich old wine, and with a clear-headedness and logical acumen which comes only to those who have lived a careful life, had evidently overlooked, as Jeames remarked, no point in the length and breadth of his discourse, but had rather seemed to find more and more of his earlier vigour from firstly to secondly, and from

secondly, thirdly and fourthly to the very end of his appeal to what the worthy beadle called the "uncommon sense o' a godly congregation."

The homily lasted neither longer nor shorter than the orthodox length—"the hour's penance and a bit-tock," of the early experience of some of us ; and while there was nothing in it that could well be seized upon by the hypercritical, neither was there anything that could not be directly applied to the everyday life and conversation of young and old. In a word, it was a good, sound, practical discourse, delivered with that easy deliberation of an honest man, which makes every word tell.

The text in itself was rather a startling one, especially to men and women who had at least the credit of striving from day to day to follow uprightly the even tenor of their way according to the light of village ethics,—was in reality the enunciation of a principle which made the whole congregation stare for the moment towards the old sounding-board over the minister's head, as if it had been guilty of some misdemeanour or other, in reverberating through every nook and corner of the "auld biggin'," words that all but implied an accusation against the public and private integrity of Kartdale. The pulpit cushion, on which the big Bible and its psalm-book lay, seemed to blush at the crimson innuendo lurking in the passage of Scripture selected, and shook its great tassels over the head of the precentor, as if to declare, with the trepidation of the parish upon them, that there was something coming from a quarter near by that would, according to the euphony of Jeames's hope, "mak' ilka

man, woman and wean o' the congregation tak' tent o' their ways."

"There's nae doubt, the practical discourse is a needcessity at times," he was accustomed to say under such circumstances. "The backslider requires a bit pu'ing up every now and again, something to startle him out o' the deadening effects o' his ain wrang-daein', and though it is no for me to say ill o' onybody, the kind o' throuither-witted amang us—few and far between as they are, guid be thankit !—like weel enough at times to hae something to talk about as weel as the best o' us. The understanding o' a th'rough-gaun theology is no in everybody's line."

And yet, after all, the text was not such an unusual one. Sermons have been preached from it often enough, not only in Kartdale, but in every parish in the empire. Nobody can deny the wealth of pulpit resource that is in it, nor the eloquence of the unseen that is of such easy access in its context. Every forensic straw in it has probably been well threshed out. Nevertheless, when Mr. Thomson's sermon was over, there were few who could say they had ever heard such another discourse preached from the pertinency of its statement. "All liars shall have their portion." And if the text seemed new through its curtailment, the sermon sounded all the more original. "Shall have their portion." Where? Here! In this present life! But the Book says more than that, as no doubt our friend Jeames would have exclaimed had he been arguing with anyone endeavouring to justify the clipping of the full statement. That is true. But how many of our ministers of the new school, or even of

the old school, would care to be bound by the rule of giving the whole context when they announce their text? Indeed, how many a brilliant discourse would be spoiled by giving the whole verse! Besides, the minister of Kartdale had not proceeded beyond the first section of his "first head," before he had convinced his hearers that it was no intention of his to give an exposition of the life to come. As things happened, he said little, if anything, about the life to come, and yet when he had finished, nobody could say that his logic was not to the point, his applications direct and forcible, and his appeal an earnest and effective one.

While the congregation were passing down the avenue on their way home, there was, naturally enough, a good deal of discussion about what the minister had been saying. Indeed, so direct had been the effect on Robin Drum's mind, that he decided to let his guidwife and the bairns find their way home for themselves, while he went round to the session-house to compare notes with his friend the church officer, about the "unusualness" of the minister's disquisition on the truthfulness of Kartdale folk in particular, and of society in general. As was well known, there was not much that could well transpire within the precincts of Kartdale Kirk, and yet escape the closeted consideration of the two worthies.

"Weel, Jeames," said Robin, on drawing his breath, after the minister, delivered of his gown and bands, had departed from the session-house to the manse, "What a fine old man he is, and sae maisterly in his deportment, as ane might say. Did ye ever hear the like o' his eloquence the night, in face o' his seventy

years and a bit? Man, didnae the words o' truth and soberness he uttered about the truth itsel' sound pure and sweet to us puir mortals?"

"Ay, fine enough they were, I'll grant, Mr. Drum," answered Jeames with the air of one having authority to speak to the purpose; "but with what sweetness to the erring, I'm no prepared to say. The text is a grand aye, and ably was it handled."

"But did ye ever hear the text expounded in sic a light afore?" continued Robin; "it seemed mair like a revelation to me than an exposition, something like a message frae the very school o' the prophets itsel'."

"The doctrine is never deficient in the parish kirk o' Kartdale," Jeames replied, "and if I hae said this ance, I've said it a hunderd times. There's nae cauld kail het again to be looked for frae our pulpit, nor spoon-feed either. I hae sat within its shadow for the feck o' forty year or mair, and unless in the case o' some stranger or ither occupying the seat that Mr. Thomson sae ably fills as God's ain representative, I hae never had muckle cause to repent o' what has issued frae under its sounding-board in behalf o' a' humanity willing to be improved. That there is need for sic preaching as his in thae degenerate times has been made plain enough in the words o' the sermon the night,—words that a wean couldnae weel misunderstand, nor fail to direct its wavering steps by. There's a use and wont about this liein' among gentle and semple,—a kind o' fashionable flummery o' speech that is aye smirking in the face o' a man's straightforward behaviour, a mak-believe that is afeart o' offending;

and yet it is neither mair nor less than liein' a' the same. Exactly sae !"

"It tak's a lot o' preaching to gar things gang right, gin' ance they gang wrang," Robin again ventured to say.

"That's as it may be," answered Jeames, "but it's nae reason in itsel' for a' that why the right kind o' preaching shouldnae be favoured by the sensible, and the wrang kind o' preaching frowned down upon. This worl' o' ours seems to hae gaen clean gyte in its endeavours to put a face on things, or, in ither words, to gar the warse appear the better reason. Self-seeking seems at times to hae become its only kind o' seeking. Wi' a bad bargain in ae hand and a lie in the tither, men are coming to fling loose frae morality ; and I hae actually heard an honest man declare that he had been obleeged to gie up business simply because he couldnae stand the prevarications o' competition. The spirit o' competition, that seems to be bred in the bone o' the rising generation, is certainly responsible for the maist o' the liein' that gangs on, and unless our ministers can hansel with their preaching the true spirit o' contentment amang men, the worl', in my opinion, is likely to gang frae bad to worse. For a' that, we cannae but tak' some comfort frae the sermon we hae had the night. There are some o' us that hav-nae yet bowed the knee to Baal; and let us e'en hope that the young folks wha seemed sae interested wi' the minister's way o' putting things this evening, will tak a grue at a' kinds o' deception, and grow up to be as honest in their day and generation as were the founders o' the kirk o' Kartdale. Exactly sae !"

Nor indeed was Jeames far wrong when he said that the minister had, on this occasion, uttered no word that even the youngest of the congregation could not understand, and possibly appreciate. Sometimes when the venerable divine, confident in his learning, would be handling a doctrinal point, the more youthful adherents had to leave the criticism of his discourse to Jeames and those of the congregation of his theological calibre. But in this instance, nothing had passed over their heads. There was no third party present or absent, expressed or understood. The discussion was between the minister and his flock. He spoke to them, not about somebody they more or less resembled. In a word, his thesis was plain and practical, swerving not from the downright maxim of his own selection for the day,—“Honesty of speech is the best policy.” All lying—from the white lie that has so much of a simpering society sweetness about it, to the black, malicious lie that is so heinous in the sight of all grades of society,—is self-deception, a mockery and a snare.

“Ay, my brethren,” exclaimed the old man in his peroration ; “as we look at one another, sitting here, as it were in the presence of God himself, is it possible for any of us to feel that the telling of lies can be anything but an abomination to Him who looks upon every form of sin with abhorrence. Search as you may, can any of you find a lie in his handiwork, revealed in the page of nature, spread out in sunshine as it has been to-day, in the golden fruition of an approaching harvest ? What is it that you say, Master Philosopher ? Things in nature are not what they seem ! That is true ; but how could you, if you please,

have found that out, unless the God of nature had endowed you with the spirit of truth to distinguish the seeming from the reality? What is that you say, Master Merchant? Business methods are special methods which the ultra-righteous cannot well understand! And who, may I ask, wrote this new moral law of merchandise or commercial amendment to the old moral law delivered to all the generations of men from Mount Sinai? Has it been revealed only to you and those of your kind? If it abrogates the ninth of God's precepts, does it also eliminate "Thou shalt not steal," when you come to practise it as a tenet of the new commercial morality, by selling dearer than you ought to sell, and by buying at a price which will bring ruin to those with whom you deal? Perhaps you can distinguish between the depravity of the man who utters a falsehood to make good his own ends, from the criminality of the man who takes what is not his own. But I cannot, and neither can you, young man, with the white lie upon your lips as you wend your way through the mazes of society, seeking to be agreeable by acting a part rather than by being what you really are! Neither can you, young woman, as you play at your game of make-believe, with the playfulness of innocence that has no heart of innocence within it! Nor you, anxious housewife, as you stand at your doorstep spinning a history of your neighbour out of the evil or the good in your own heart, utterly regardless of the assurance of fact! No, my brethren, there is not a person present with us this evening, who will dare declare that the breaking of the ninth commandment is not as abhorrent an offence in the sight

of God, as the breaking of the eighth. All lying is soul deception, self-deception, with him that practises it. It is a breaking of God's own precept which the fashionable wiles of a drawing-room etiquette cannot justify, nor the hastening to be rich by commercial over-reaching, nor the desire to avoid the responsibilities of life that come to all of us. All deception, direct or indirect, sweet or bitter, is a poison that feeds like a canker on the good in the soul of the man who practises it, and cannot fail to bring its own dire reward in the life which now is and that which is to come."

With such words as these ringing in their ears, was it to be wondered that the congregation should be more inclined than usual to examine the principles they were employed to enunciate, and to discuss them one with another as they took their way homewards through the village. The best of sermons is often, alas ! only an eight day's wonder—perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say an eight hours' or eight minutes' wonder ; and probably there were even some of Mr. Thomson's hearers who let some of the pertinent truths he uttered in at the one ear and out at the other. There were more, however, than Jeames and Robin Drum who had been struck with the force of these truths, and who were not likely ever to forget the sermon, as the sequel will show.

Of the many discussions that were said to have been overheard, there was at least one which is known to have taken a peculiar turn, as the two young men sharing in it happened to follow Mr. Drum to the session-house. One of these gentlemen we have heard

of before, in the person of Mr. William Turnbull—better known in the village as Willie Turnbull—the young man who had been directly or indirectly the cause of one of Jeames's "bits o' trials," on a Sunday morning at the Cross Keys, as our readers may remember. His companion, on the other hand, was one who was intimately associated with the minor affairs of the church, such as the Sunday-school and the weekly practice under the precentor, and it was he that was on an errand to Jeames to speak about some arrangements for holding a meeting in the session-house on a week-day evening, when the conversation about the minister's sermon took place between him and Mr. Turnbull.

"It may be all very true what the old gentleman has been saying," said Willie to his companion, who was spoken of by everybody in Kartdale as 'Robert Mowbray, the nevy and heir o' auld Mr. Fairservice, the grocer,' and is here introduced to the reader as such. "Things are whiles easy enough looking, when one has only to talk about them; but I don't believe this speaking of the truth on every occasion could be carried out for more than two or three days at a time without being attended with serious consequences to all parties concerned. Lie! Why, you can hardly draw your breath without getting off a whopper to screen yourself and your real opinions from folk that would be mad were you to show any inclination to differ from them."

"There are different standpoints, as there may be different worlds of our own making for all of us," answered Mr. Mowbray. "A practice, nevertheless, is

right or wrong in itself, irrespective of what this man says or the other man thinks. If you have anything to say against the sermon and the minister's opinion, you had better sing a mild tune in the presence of the minister's man."

"Of course," said Willie. "Is nae that just what I have been saying. Subdue your opinions, and, if ye cannae hide them away from folk that would persecute you for holding them, lie as much as you like as long as you're not found out ;" and just as they had reached this point in the conversation, they came into the presence of Jeames and Robin Drum, while these worthies were still in the midst of their discussion about the same thing.

Jeames seemed to know at once what Robert Mowbray had come round to see him about, and, after the matter had been arranged between them, the former turned to Willie to ask him what he thought of Mr. Thomson's sermon.

"Me and Mr. Drum here, hae just been haein' a word or twa about the principles he has been laying down, and we agree that the discourse was ane o' the best that has ever come frae a place whaur the best is aye likely to be had, as long as the auld man survives."

"Well, Jeames, I have also been expressing an opinion to Robert about these same principles, though I'm afraid he's not as likely to agree with me as readily as Mr. Drum has been agreeing with you. You know there is a wide gulf fixed, as you yourself might say, between the practical and the theoretical."

"That may be the case in some of the actualities o'

life," returned Jeames, "but do ye think that sic should be the case?"

"I'm neither king, minister nor god to say what should be," responded Willie, "but, with my senses about me, I can easily make out what is, according to the ways of the sons of men, and what is not. If it be my purpose to live in Rome, I must e'en act as the people of Rome act, or take the consequences."

"The reformer has aye to tak' the consequences of daein' what is right, and keep on takin' them, until there are nane to tak'. Rome wasnae built in a day, and neither will it be reformed in a day."

"That's right, Jeames," interrupted Robert Mowbray. "Besides, the consequences of doing the right are never very much to be dreaded at any time, and far less in the long-run. Upright conduct always brings its own reward."

"That is, if the punishment of the persecutor can always be looked upon as a reward," said Willie. "You just try to walk the chalk mark of morality, in the face of society, stepping neither to the right hand nor the left to steady yourself; and in a week or less time you will see where you will be. As I said before we came in, none of us can very well keep from disguising our feelings at times, in order to avoid hurting the feelings of others, as we try to stagger along the chalk line."

"I'm thinking ye hae a kind o' liking towards expediency," said Jeames; "and ye ken, Mr. Turnbull, expediency is no muckle better than a will-o'-the-wisp amang the perfectibilities. Your logic is maybe a

kennin' ower narrow, gin I should say sae, at least it's a wee bit na.rower, ye'll allow, than the minister's."

"You see," again interrupted Robert, smiling, "you have only been speaking for yourself, Willie."

"I'm just as much speaking for other folks, as was the minister, a few minutes ago," was Willie's warm assertion. "A man doesnae require to go to college to find out what is expected of him as a citizen."

"But neither will the gangin' to college prevent a man frae bein' an authority on the needcessities o' a sound morality. The minister is our minister, and we maun respect what he says," and Jeames was evidently becoming a little nettled at Willie's pertinencies.

"Did I not tell you what you would get?" exclaimed Mowbray, still laughing in a kindly way at his friend.

"And did I not tell you what I expected?" was Willie's retort. "It's the way of the world, and it is what you yourself may expect if you think of putting into practice the pulpit principles laid down this evening."

"Then you still claim to be an authority?" asked Robert, addressing his companion, but turning to Jeames and Robin Drum as if for further sympathy. "Speaking for society, you know what the demands of society are. Are you aware that your personal experience does not extend much farther than the social circles of Kartdale? As an authority, do you speak for society in general, or only for that section of it 'whereof you are a well-deserving pillar'?"

"I mean to say what I say, and to speak what can easily be understood. I am speaking for myself in

the first place ; but, if you like, I may as well, in this matter, speak for you and Jeames here and Mr. Drum, honest man as I know him to be."

"But surely not for the minister?"

"That is just again as you like," continued Willie. "He has a pulpit from which he can speak for himself, and there's nae discussion up there."

"What's that? You surely will not venture so far as to say in presence of the minister's prime minister and his elder, that he doesnae practice what he preaches?"

"I have been fool enough to venture ower far already in expressing my opinions in presence of those that may be offended at them and me ; and I do not intend to say anything of the kind against anyone, and far less against a gentleman whom everybody in the parish venerates, not to speak of the respect in which both Jeames and Mr. Drum are held by everybody who knows them. The sermon was an advice to us to speak the truth on all occasions, and all that I mean to say, to keep beyond offending anybody, is that in society there is always a great difference between practising and preaching. As I have sometimes heard Jeames himself say, the abstract and the concrete are no aye twins."

"And neither are they, Mr. Turnbull," Jeames broke in, anxious to have an opportunity of closing the discussion as far as he was concerned. "But preaching sic as that we hae heard the night can hardly come under the category o' the abstract. It was practical in ilka detail."

"Ay, practical it was," interrupted Robin Drum.

"And slow am I to believe that Mr. Turnbull here thinks ither than we do about it, whatever difficulties there may lie in the way o' aye speaking the truth and shaming the deil. Some folk maybe dinnae believe in shaming the personation o' a' harm-doing; but the man that is honest to himsel' doesnae fear muckle the giein' o' offence to the faither o' lies, or to ony o' his bairns. Besides, what a won'erfu' whirl o' affectation and double-facedness is this same society that is to keep us frae speaking the truth gin we ance resolve to dae sae? A bonnie moral force it has been in makin' men and women better! A bonnie moral force out o' which to fashion a high-priest o' social authority! Guidness me, to hear some folk talk, ye would think the smirk o' society, that wouldnae offend for a saxpence, is the very divinity o' reform, and unless we adorn our walk and conversation with it every day as soon as we get up out o' bed, there'll be a scent about us o' nonconformity that'll mak' ilka gentleman o' them turn up his nose at us. The Children o' Israel, puir, fickle creatures that they were, could thole as bad bein' shown the error o' their ways, as dae the children o' society the day; but, whether or no, they had aye to come back to the first principle o' honesty, sobriety and ae wife. And sae maun this nebsy creature, ca'd society, knuckle down to the only morality there is. There's nae smirk on the face o' the eternities. A lie is a lie, and there's nae getting ower't, and it'll no be me for ane, nor the minister, nor Mr. Drum here, as representing the eldership, that'll gie, I'm sure, ony countenance to the runi'gait hussy they ca' society in her tantrums. She's a bad ane at heart, a new kind o'

scarlet lady as fu' o' tricks again' the truth as the tither ; and I fain hope nane o' our congregation, as weel for his ain sake as for ours, will think o' setting her up as a goddess o' reason, a kind o' conscience-guide, either for himsel' or for ithers. Exactly sae !”

To pursue the argument further in Jeames's presence, after such a pronouncement, would have been a kind of sacrilege within the betherell's own domains. The respect of boyhood cannot be shaken off even by those who sometimes make a show of shaking it off ; and Willie, receiving a tacit sort of signal from Robert, decided, out of that respect which had never left him, notwithstanding his many irregularities, to let his old friend and quondam tutor have the last word. It was evidently not the intention of the young men, however, to let the discussion rest after Jeames had dismissed it with his *ex cathedra* phrase. As soon as they had passed out into the darkness on their way home, they resumed, with perhaps even more earnestness, the consideration of the position the minister had taken about this speaking of the truth under all circumstances.

“I wasnae far from the fire of persecution, when I made that remark about the minister,” said Willie, “or rather the remark you forced me into making. The auld beadle's eyes fairly glistened in his head when he thought I was impugning the minister's action.”

“And no wonder,” replied Robert, “for I'm sure none of us could ever think of Mr. Thomson telling a lie.”

“Not even a bit of a white one at a Presbytery meeting, when the debate happens to be kind of warm ?”

said Willie, *sotto voce*, laughing within his words in the darkness.

"No sir ; not even under such circumstances," and there was the emphasis of indignation in Robert's answer, that emphasis of indignation which was sure to come into the speech of any of the congregation when their minister was assailed even in the mildest phrase.

"Well, well, then ; never mind Mr. Thomson personally : I respect him and the responsible position he holds over us as much as you do. But about the practice of the thing. Have you been so far converted to his way of thinking as to try your hand at reducing his principles to an every-day routine ? The proof of the pudding is the preelin' of it. Have you decided to try your fortune at truth-telling ?"

"I am firmly of the opinion that the minister is right."

"Nobody denies that, old man," said Willie. "His theory is as sound as the Book, and I have maintained that from the beginning."

"And what is more," continued Robert, giving no heed to the interruption, "the minister's own example gives me a well-grounded faith in human nature."

"In Jeames's perfectibilities, I suppose."

"And I have really come to believe that speaking the truth at all times may not only be practicable but profitable."

"Hear, hear !" exclaimed Willie, "the profitabilities are never far from being some folks' perfectibilities. Tuts, tuts, nothing of the kind. No personal reference whatever. We know each other ower well for that.

I was only making an irrelevant remark. Excuse me. But what are you coming to?"

Robert kept silent for a minute.

"Come, come, old man, you needn't be so easily offended at a fellow with his fun."

"I am not offended; I am in earnest."

"Eh! in earnest?"

"Yes, in earnest about this speaking of the truth."

"Well, so am I."

"But I mean to try to speak the truth on all occasions, from this out."

"You do?"

"I do."

"Positive?"

"Yes, my mind is finally made up. You may call it sudden conversion and laugh at it if you like. But I have never at any time given much heed to the argument that is only a silly laugh; and you know that, Willie. I believe this speaking of the truth, can be done in small matters as in great affairs, in our ordinary walk and conversation, as in important business transactions. There's a meanness about deception that every manly man should tak' a grue at; and I, for one, have decided, after hearing what the minister has said, to be done with it in every shape and form, as far as God and guid sense, as Jeames would say, will gie me guidance."

"Well, well, after such a decision as that, what is going to happen? You mean from this time out to speak the truth—"

"Yes, that's my decision."

"The whole truth?"

"Well, yes ; the whole truth, as far as duty forces me to do so."

"And nothing but the truth?"

"Yes, so help me, God."

"Serious?"

"I never felt more serious, perhaps, in all my life."

"Dear me!" at last exclaimed Willie, with a sigh in which there was an element of Robert's own seriousness ; "this is putting a new face on things. Come ower here to the lamplight till I see if there isnae the usual tell-tale twinkle in your eye. This is no the first time you've taken your fun off Willie Turnbull. Well, no, there's nothing there but all seriousness. You evidently mean what you say. But, really, old man, you mustn't carry your eccentricity to such lengths as that. I have known how eccentric you can be at times ; at least I have often thought it eccentricity on your part when you were drawing me ower the coals ; and let me tell you, you never can come to a decision that will be so readily set down as an eccentricity as this notion of yours about speaking the truth in the wee as well as in the big. Better take time to reconsider the matter. You may think I'm in fun, but I'm not."

"It is not often you are not in fun," interrupted Robert.

"That is as it may be," continued Mr. Turnbull, "but I am in earnest the now, anyway. Think well before you take such a step as you have been hinting at. Think of your uncle, and your aunt, of your employers, of your sweetheart, if you have really made up your mind about that matter, and, if not, think of your

humble servant, the friend who has always stood by you in all your hazards, and who still esteems you a kind of sensible man. Think well of the full responsibilities of this resolution of yours. You will offend, as sure as surety itself, both friend and foe, however few you may have of the latter. You will not offend me, of course, for I am forewarned ; but you will certainly offend the most of those who think well of you, perhaps sever every connection that binds you to the pleasant things of this world."

"Is Saul also among the prophets?"

"Well, no, Robert Mowbray, I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but all the same I can see what is going to happen to you, when you come to tilt with the windmills. Don Quixote was an honest man, but he was a fool for his pains, all the same. The 'unco guid' tell us that we shouldnae let the sun go down upon our wrath."

"The Bible tells us the same thing, Willie."

"The Bible be it, then ; but as for me, I would advise you no to let the starlight go down on your folly. Be advised in time, and don't become a laughing-stock with the Sancho Panzas of society, who sometimes find their island, only to wish they had never set out in search of it."

"Your histrionic sympathy is a wee bit misplaced," said Robert, turning to bid his friend good-night. "You are half in fun, but I am whole in earnest. My decision is not likely to be changed the instant it has been formed ; and it is perhaps as well that all the people have disappeared from the streets, or they would probably be inclined to think that the sermon, how-

ever it denounced all kinds of untruthfulness, gave us a kind of license to break the Sabbath night. You're a worldly-minded young man, I'm afraid, Willie Turnbull, and it would certainly be a struggle with the biggest of wind-mills for a man to try to convert you. I hardly expected you would join me in a crusade of this kind on your own account. I am not, therefore, disappointed, though I am glad there is nobody near by to hear you in the part of Mephisto, the tempter."

It was true what Robert Mowbray said. The streets by this time were deserted. The congregation had dispersed and completely disappeared before the two young men had left the session-house. The after-discussion had taken place in the long avenue, while the disputants were approaching the lamplight over the gateway on their way into the street. Jeames and Robin Drum had gone home by the gateway in the rear of the church grounds, so that there was no one to disturb the conversation of the two companions, no one to overhear it, perhaps, save the writer, who, with the sanction of his readers, may take advantage of the silence and the lamplight, in taking a good look at both of the disputants, before they disappear in the darkness of the night.

CHAPTER II.

“Ye’ll allow ye sometimes are wrang, auld wife,
As weel about things as wi’ men ;
Sae stir up a bit, and burnish your wit ;
Jist say ower your say ance again, auld wife,
Till e’en to yoursel’ it be plain.”

Counting by the thousand, there are but few people in the world who cannot easily pass in a crowd without being noticed. How the hermit of Craigenputtoch must have laughed within himself, if not with his solitary companion, when the conceit first entered his soul to write up the philosophy of clothes ! With the zig-zag of a hundred odd fancies darting and flashing through the lingual ghost-nooks of his imagination, with the ridiculous finding its fun in the hurry and scurry of the millions of earth, as they think to find distinguishment, despite the accident of clothes, he must have had a gay moment of it, amid the many subjectivities of his moorland retreat. But in starting to count by the thousand, our selected crowd is not to be supposed as being other than an ordinary crowd of mortals attired in a Christian-like way. The difficulty of calculating how many would or would not escape notice in a crowd deprived of the aforesaid accident, is rather too much of a difficulty for us to solve, as it

would probably have been even for Thomas Carlyle; and hence when it is said that there are few people in the world who cannot easily pass in a crowd counting by the thousand, the number includes, let it be understood, only persons in a presentable condition of body, suitably adorned with the ordinary wear and tear of human raiment.

And high though the word of praise may seem, Robert Mowbray was one of the few. Of course everybody in Kartdale knew him by sight, just as it was once a boast of his that there was not a man, woman, or child in the village whom he did not know in the same way. Everybody also spoke of him by his full name, and could readily point him out to anyone even when seen at a distance. But outside of Robert's Kartdale acquaintances, had any stranger happened to meet him in the thoroughfare of a large city, he or she would hardly have passed him without expressing a desire to learn who he was. He was tall enough to be handsome, and yet nobody ever seemed inclined to say he was handsome, no, not even the young ladies of Kartdale, though with nearly all of them he was known to be rather a favourite. Indeed, the question had not unfrequently been discussed, pawkily enough, in the gossiping circles of the village. Sides had even sometimes been taken by the more giddy of the female sex. Yet the only verdict that seemed to hold its own for any length of time was the verdict of the older people, who maintained that Robert Mowbray was a hantle better than handsome,—“he was a sensible young man.”

And possibly it was this verdict, corroborated, as it

could nearly always be instantly by the first impression he produced on one, that made young Mowbray's face and figure so interesting a study, though perhaps it was more his general demeanour—his affable acceptance of acquaintanceship—than his face that made the first favourable impression. Indeed, his face had to be scanned more than once before there disappeared from it a decidedly plebeian "*tout ensemble*." If the more matured criticism of his massive head clustering with raven curls, found vent in the expression "Apollo Restored," it was often suspended should the smile disappear from his face. As his uncle would often say to him, when the bantering spirit was on him, which was nearly always, except when he was in a fit of temper,—“Dear me, Robert, if it werenae for that unruly member o’ yours, and ye ken I don’t mean your tongue, for that is aye suave enough, ye wouldnae be ill-favoured after a’. It has been a sair problem wi’ me how to classify it, but whether it is Roman or Grecian, a Wellington’s or a Napoleon’s, is fairly beyond my powers o’ comprehension to say.”

And perhaps the old man was right. As charity is said to cover a multitude of sins, a defect will even also cover a multitude of virtues. One blemish will mar the beauties of godhead. And yet, however near he came to the truth in his banter, he did not always escape reprisal when Mrs. Fairservice came to Robert’s rescue.

“Ye had better ne’er fash your head about the matter, guidman,” she would often say. “Ye hae an unruly member o’ your ain, and weel ye ken whether it is your tongue or no. The callan’ is weel enough

wi' a' your haiverin'. Gin a' folk's manners were as nice as some folk's faces, it would maybe be better for everybody's peace and comfort."

And whether the old man had made the right discovery or not, there had never at least been raised any objection to the other features of Robert Mowbray's face. Nor could there well be. His broad forehead, high and well balanced, indicated a breadth of intelligence which nobody ever denied him; while his deep blue eyes, liquid as the transparency of truth itself, convinced everybody with whom he happened to come in contact, that within the rippling curves in which they were set, and behind them, there was a straightforward good-nature, cheerful enough in its strength to enjoy a good joke, and strong enough in its cheerfulness to discern where the goodness of the joke began and ended. The man who cannot laugh, and laugh heartily, and in good season, is a man to be shunned. If he be not a dangerous man, there is at least something wrong with his machinery. His mental, if not his physical nature, perhaps even his moral nature, is out of joint. And no such a person was Robert Mowbray. His relationships with those of his kind never belied the definition which classifies man as "*l'animal qui rit.*" For no merrier fellow was there within the confines of Kartdale, nor even beyond them, for that matter, than Mr. Fairservice's nephew, —no one whose company was more sought after in the village social gatherings. Not only could he enjoy a good joke, but he could tell a good story, was able to take part of an evening in musical tournaments, give a reading at a Sunday-school entertainment, or

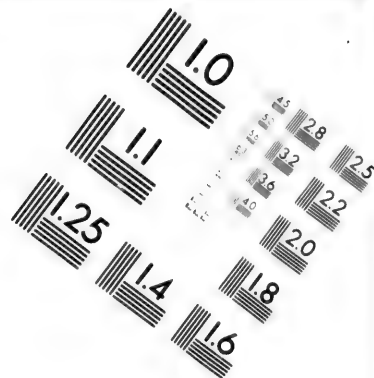
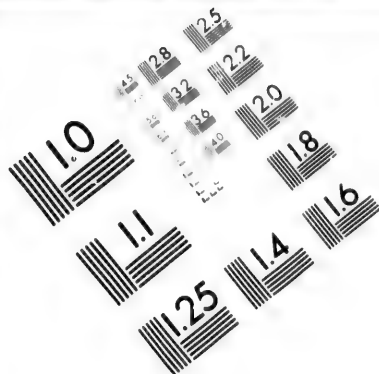
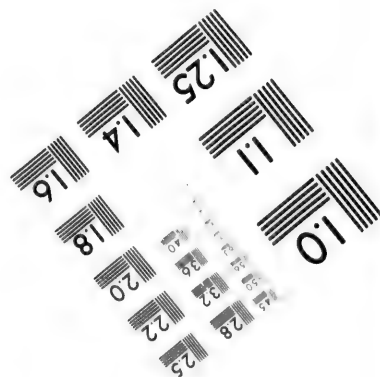
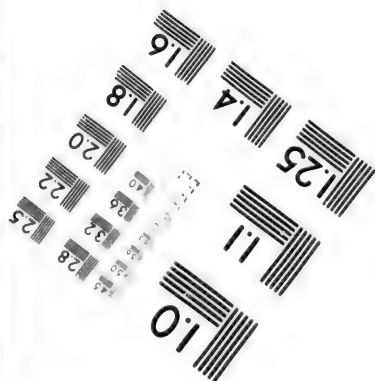
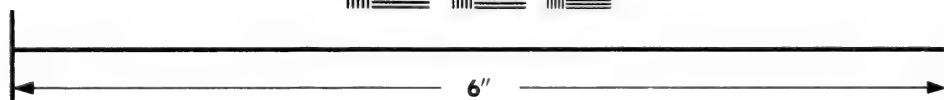
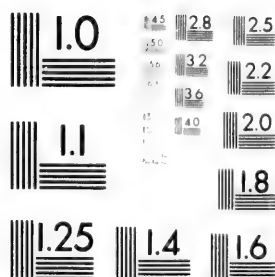


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)



**Photographic
Sciences
Corporation**

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

4.5
28
32
25
22
20

10

take part in the organization of any celebration the young folks might have in hand. And yet, with all his *bonhomie*, there was a decisive morale about his demeanour, a sort of steadfastness of temperament which could nearly always restrain his companions from any irregularity in word or act. He knew where the line of legitimacy of frolic was to be drawn, and it was no doubt this same seriousness of character, more perhaps than his effervescent good-nature, that made him an influence among the young people of the place, and forced the older folks to say that he was better than handsome.

"I ken few young men in Kartdale congregation," Jeames, the sexton, has been heard to say when speaking of Robert, who, with the writer and others of the boys of Kartdale had come under the tutelage of that officer during the Sundays of his minority; "I ken few young men in whase future I hae mair confidence, than in Robert Mowbray's. He is a weel-faured laddie in baith mind and body, being in nae wise scrimpit in his respect unto the things that maketh for guid to them that walk in the footsteps o' the wise. There's enough and to spare o' foppery amang the young folks o' the time, that mak's me something of a numskull in my ain e'en when I try to analyze it. The thing is no kittle to catch, and seems to come on them like the measles or the scarlet fever. But tak' my word for it, there's nae foppery to be found about Robert Mowbray, however run after he may be in the circles o' the light-hearted. I ken weel enough that there are some ill-naturedly critical folk in some pairts o' Kartdale that think to rank the young man after a

fashion o' their ain, as being little short o' a kind o' hypocrite in some things. He's ower free wi' his fun they say, to be ony better than he should be. But there are ill-natured folk o' that kind in ilka sma' community, and even I mysel' in my bits o' trials hae come in for their snash. The fact is, gie sic critics a man that's a' bad, and they hae naethin' to say again him, but gie them ane like Robert Mowbray, to find fau't wi', and they are sure to pock-mark him wi' their 'nyaffin. Still, for a' that, there is the makin' o' a clean-shanked Christian about Robert. He has a respect for authority, and that's saying a guid deal for him in thae times, when the young seem to giggle at maist o' the serious things o' life. He's a sensible lad, and his ensample, as far as I can see, is haein' a guid effect amang the company wi' whom he consorts. Exactly sae !"

Nor in the face of what has been said in this narrative, is Jeames's criticism in any way misleading. Robert Mowbray had his decriers among his fellow-townsmen. The young man had few, if any, downright enemies, but for all that, he was not unfrequently a theme in the mouths of those sour-visaged busy-bodies, who, when they cannot find any well-defined vice in their neighbor, make one of his virtues serve their turn in their animadversions. With such, Robert was far from being all that he was held up to be. There was just a possible overdoing of it with the young man, as they said. He was sensible enough, but, compared with what young people generally are, there was danger of his being too good, as if that were possible. Well, no, he was no Puritan in his manners;

he was always pleasant enough to meet, and he could crack a good joke; there was no gainsaying that. Yes, his merry laugh was taking enough, and perhaps there was nothing of the sanctimonious about it. But should there not be more of the sanctimonious about everything he does? He professes a good deal in his Sunday-school work, and his comings and goings about kirk affairs. The "unco guid" have the best o' good words to say about him, though it be only at times; and it is quite possible that he may be all they say he is. But all is not gold that glitters in a narrow light; and if the kirk folk only knew what kind of company he sometimes keeps, they would hardly be inclined to give him all the credit he gets. It is an easy enough thing for any young man, good, bad, or indifferent, to make himself popular with the pious and impious, if he only be dexterous enough in practising the art that hides the art. The man with the iron mask was not the only man that ever wore a mask, and time would tell whether Robert Mowbray was all he pretended to be. When a man like him persevered, in spite of everybody's advice, in keeping company with such a harum-scarum as Willie Turnbull, it was not very difficult to predict how he would end, with all his airs of goodness of heart and uprightness of behaviour.

That Robert Mowbray kept company with Willie Turnbull went without saying in Kartdale, and many a solemn Cassandra-like shake of the head was indulged in at the companionship, even by some of the former's best friends. How the two had come to form such a companionship is difficult of explanation, unless it

arose from the affinity which men and things have so often for their opposites; for in nearly every respect Mr. William Turnbull was the very antithesis of his comrade. And yet, strange though the companionship may have seemed, it was surely even more strange that people should have been found so ready to blame Robert for keeping company with his friend, ay, a great deal readier than they were in condemning Willie for his extravagances.

"The ethical paradox," as Jeames has been heard to say, "o' folks condemning the wrang man, cannae but mak' us marvel at times at the eccentricities o' public opinion. Dear me, there's nae getting square wi' her, sae fickle and camstrarie is the jade, when she tak's ane o' her whims about folk. Now, there is Robert Mowbray and Willie Turnbull, twa young men o' our congregation, that may be said to be keeping ilk ither's company. And what for no? Tak' my word for it, Willie 'ill learn mair guid frae Robert, that Robert 'ill learn o' bad frae Willie. And yet public opinion is for the maist pairt down on Robert for consorting wi' Willie, while they say little or naething about the backslidings o' his friend. Weel, weel, it's no for me to find fault, for if the truth maun out, there's no sae muckle to say again' puir Willie after a'; at least, I haenae the heart to be hard on him. He hasnae, maybe, been brought up as I would hae brought up a son o' mine, gin Providence had gien me ane, though it's hard to tell. But, after a' has been said and done, he's a generous-hearted kind o' a chiel, whase motto in this worl' seems to be share and share alike. I've kenn'd mony a waur kind than Willie, and folk may

tak' his pairt as much as they like, as far as I'm concerned. Still, why shouldnae public opinion be as gleg to protect the tane as the tither? It's jist what I hae said; public opinion is a whimsical jade, and it's no for the wisest o' us to mak' out what road she'll tak' in her judgments about men. Exactly sae!"

And though perhaps the question of Mr. Turnbull's standing was never of much public moment in Kartdale, the worst that could be said of him was that he was more or less a young man of the world, whatever that may mean, living in the meantime on expectations which might or might not be fully realized on the death of his uncle, a prominent hardware merchant in the village. To believe what some people said of him, he had been brought up as a gentleman, and if a gentleman consists in the outward appearance only, there was always an aspect of success of such training about him, for no man in the town was better dressed than the nephew of Mr. Stewarton. Indeed, about Willie's personal appearance there was always the best to be said. Whatever rank he might have attained to in the crowd, deprived of the accident of clothing, he certainly held no second place among the beaux of Kartdale. His business was to look well. Tall and fairly well as Willie was built, the tailor of Kartdale could find no better a model among his customers on whom to display his goods and handicraft, than on the man who was full of suggestions gained from a personal experience with his own person, and ambitious to shine as a beau-ideal beau, a kind of double-barrelled gentleman at large.

Of Willie's true character there was never either the

best or the worst to be said in the town, as we have already seen. Jeames's ethical paradox had no corrective influence in placing his character in its true light. If he was idle, there was no hypocrisy about him anyway, not the shadow of hypocrisy. Every act of his, generous-hearted fellow that he was, was as transparent as a child's; well no, perhaps, not as innocent as a child's, but at least as easily seen through, as glass itself. If he was vain, it was a fault common enough among men with too much time on their hands; and, if he was a little silly in his vanity at times, he was certainly not proud. No, pride in a young man is a hateful offence, and as such was never to be seen in Willie Turnbull in his association with those of his kind, with whom he was always "hail-fellow-well-met." Well, yes, he was improvident; there was no hiding of that. But what had he to be provident about? He had nobody save himself to think of in the meantime; and, when he came to contend with the stern realities of life, it would be time enough for him to be cured of his improvidence. What's that? He was inclined to be intemperate? That's just like the spy-wives there are about, to watch a young man's every movement. There is no doubt that he steps in occasionally to the Cross Keys, but it is more for the company he finds there, no doubt, than for appeasing any appetite he has acquired for strong drink,—more to while away an hour than to get bousy like some folks. No, he has no occupation, nor does he seem inclined to settle down to any kind of steady employment. It's a pity, no doubt. But who's to blame? Few young men care to turn their hand to any regular employment

unless the necessity presses upon them; and if there is anybody to blame for the indiscretion of young folks in this respect, it is surely those who have had to do with their bringing up.

And thus it was that Willie Turnbull, under the patronage of those who were ready enough to blame Robert Mowbray for keeping company with him, made good the *rôle* he had set himself of being a gentleman at large in Kartdale. Of his mental equipment there was little or nothing to boast. He had been fairly well educated, having passed through Mr. Allen's hands; and the boy possessed a pretty poor intelligence, for whom the old schoolmaster could not do something, by way of mental development. In school, Willie's intellectual rank, however, was much what it afterwards became among men. He was smart enough, and on that account some one had called him clever; but he was never intellectually clever, as old Mr. Allen had to confess. His intelligence seldom went beyond, and only occasionally touched the tidal mark of mediocrity. The logic of his discussions with others knew no middle term save his own personal experience, his conversation being replete with his own adventures,—his many mistakes in points of etiquette or in wider social exigencies, and the manner in which he had delivered himself from the petty consequences of such. Poor Willie! as those who knew him intimately could never refrain from calling him. What a good-natured fellow he was, insipid a little in his minor conversations, but harmless,—a young man of the best opportunities, ever more of a staunch friend than a sound adviser,—a fairly fitting

representative of the ways of mediocrity, as he stands under the lamplight, looking into his friend's face with his quizzical pleasant smile.

Robert, in his remark about the breaking of the Sabbath, by standing so long on the street after leaving church, had given Willie a hint that the discussion about speaking the truth had reached a practical issue, as far as he was concerned, and might with propriety be brought to a close. But the latter had evidently been struck with some new proposition, brilliant enough perhaps from his own stand-point to justify him in accompanying Robert towards Mr. Fairservice's villa, a short distance out of town, as he took time to develop his idea with all the shrewdness of a society man.

"You evidently have some regard for public opinion after all," said he, taking advantage of Robert's remark about what people would say. "If the 'unco guid' are likely to think ill of me for conversing with a friend at the street corner on a Sunday night, what will they think of you, my Reverend Robert, when you get into an ill way of doing from speaking the truth, as you most assuredly will?"

"A good prophecy is none the worse of repetition, but a foolish one you should hide in your hat, Willie. The good people of Kartdale may think what they like about me, as long as my conscience tells me I do nothing but what is right. Public opinion is not a very safe conscience-guide to a man. The judgment of the unthinking is never much more than a flash in the pan."

"And yet a flash in the pan is a very scarey thing,

when the muzzle of the gun is pointed at you and you don't know whether it is loaded or no. I know you're stubborn enough when the fit takes you; but you've hardly had time to think carefully of what will happen should you madly stick to your resolution."

"Come then, wonderful prophet of evil, what will happen, if I persevere in speaking the truth?"

The question was something of a puzzle in its suddenness, and Willie looked at his friend as solemnly as it was possible for such as he to look, before making his reply.

"I'm sorry you're not making fun of me, Robert Mowbray," said he at length, with further solemnity in his tones, and a pause between every word.

Robert had to laugh in spite of himself. Willie always looked comical when he tried to look solemn.

"I'm sorry you're in earnest about this," said he again. "And I'm afraid I've been partly the cause of your being so. You ask me what will happen, if you continue in your present state of mind. Why, everything will happen."

"Your prophecy is sure to come true in that case, and no mistake, Willie," exclaimed Robert, still laughing. "You've made it general enough, anyway."

"Ay, you may laugh, but I feel confident that every kind of misfortune will happen to you. You ask me to specify these misfortunes more particularly? Why, man, you will be misunderstood by everybody. Before a week is gone you'll be at loggerheads with all mankind. Everybody's eye will be turned upon you as a crank. The villagers will ridicule your Utopianisms. The boys will hold their faces at an angle as

you pass; while the girls will cry out,—‘Well, now, did you ever, there’s that Robert Mowbray.’ You ask me what will happen, and I have told you to think of everybody connected with you before you become a crank, before everybody has set you aside as being mad. I’m really sorry, Robert, you have not been making fun of me, I am really and truly sorry.”

“The worst then that can happen to me, in your opinion, Willie, is that people may think I am mad, and that is bad enough.”

“They sometimes put cranks in jail.”

“You mean crooks.”

“Well, crooks be it, there’s not much difference.”

“There’s all the difference that lies between being mad and being bad. But if people should really think the very worst of me, Willie,—should think me both mad and bad,—that would not make me either mad or bad.”

“I see you’re at Jeames’s perfectibilities business again. But perhaps you may change your mind should you have to pass a day among the raving or spend a night in the county jail. The character of the punishment, rightly or wrongly inflicted, is too often taken as a symbol, if not an equivalent of the offence, even by people whom one would think ought to know better. It’s a hard business for the ex-jail bird to recover his respectability, and who would think of doing business with a man that has been in Gartnavel.”

“Still harping on the same string,” said Robert. “You havnae read the poet to much purpose when he says ‘Our world’s within, and we mak’ it oursel’s.’ I

am not responsible for the world which other people make for me."

"No, but you're forced to live in it."

"That may be, but there is aye either a higher seat in the synagogue from which you can look down upon your would-be world makers, or a lower seat where you can adorn your diminished head with the humility that brings peace to the heart. But what is the use of us prolonging the discussion? I have made up my mind. I have informed your grace of what I purpose, and by the manhood within me have I sworn to keep my vow. Shylock could say no more. I am firmly persuaded that men not only ought to speak the truth, but can speak the truth, without injury to themselves or others, without being confined either for being mad or bad."

"Don't be so sure of that," exclaimed Willie, no longer disposed to hold out. "To be misunderstood is next to being considered mad."

"But to speak the truth is to be understood, not to be misunderstood, my good fellow, and there's no perhaps about it. So good-night to you. I'm bent on trying the experiment anyway. Good-night, and the best of pleasant dreams to you."

The two young men were again on the point of parting, and yet Willie did not seem, so far, to have developed his idea. There was something on his mind still.

"Good-night, old man," repeated Robert, wondering why Willie still retained his hand.

The pause was seemingly an awkward one for both.

"But I say, Robert, you know," said the latter, at last breaking the silence.

"Well, say on, my good fellow."

"You're in earnest, of course?"

"You know I am."

"No fooling of poor Willie Turnbull?"

"Not a bit of it."

"Your bound to speak the truth from this day out?"

"Haven't I sworn to it?"

"Yes, yes, so you have; that is if there's no mistake."

"There is no mistake."

"Sure?" and Willie laid his two hands on Robert's shoulders.

"Yes, sure as surety itself."

"Well then, suppose——"

And Willie's hands dropped in trepidation or something like it.

"Suppose what?" asked Robert.

"Oh, nothing; but, I was just going to say, suppose we clinch the matter," and Willie once more held out his hand as if he wanted to bid his friend good-night again.

"How clinch the matter? Is a man's oath of no account? What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing much, Robert; of course it's Sunday night."

"It's Sunday night? Why, of course it's Sunday night. Do you think I have forgot that much, with Mr. Thomson's sermon still ringing in my ears? One would think you wanted to judge me a lunatic already."

"No, no, Robert, time enough for that, nothing of

that kind, at least in the meantime. There's nothing of the *prima facie* about me ; but——"

"Well, but what?" exclaimed Robert, for Willie had again paused. "You have something on your mind; and you're afraid to mention it. Out with it, man."

"Cou'ln't we have,—well you know," and Willie's hesitancy became all but overpowering. "Couldn't we have a kind of a bet about the matter. No offence, you know; none whatever; but it is generally the way we do, you know; a bet makes things kind of sure, at least we always think so; don't you, Robert?"

"Oh you heathen, Willie Turnbull, you worldly-minded usurer, you sacrilegious tempter, you would lay snares for the unwary and the innocent, would you? You make sure by enticing a man to swear to the keeping of his vow, and then pounce upon him with the fangs of a sharper. And then a bet on Sunday night! Why, I almost believe you are as bad as some people say you are,—worse than I really thought you to be."

"Well, well, never mind me, it's all right, you know; no offence, of course; but let us suppose it to be Monday morning; though it doesn't matter, of course;" continued Willie, somewhat ashamed at his proposition.

"But it isn't Monday morning; and surely you don't suppose I am going to inaugurate any reform in myself of speaking the truth on all occasions by telling or assuming a falsehood?"

Willie looked further crestfallen.

"Then you don't intend to bet any more?"

"That's a different story," was Robert's cautious reply. "You have thought fit to doubt my word, and have cast a slur even upon my oath, and if I do not meet your demand, I suppose you will be sure to have no faith in my resolution."

"Then you will stake a trifle on it," and Willie Turnbull, as he now began to see his idea developing, seemed to become a changed man from what he had been in the session-house while discussing matters in Jeames's presence. He was now in his proper element. He was again among the looser fish of his acquaintances in and around the Cross Keys, the worldly idler seeking the excitement that arises from having something at stake.

"You will give a fellow a chance, then?"

"Willie Turnbull," said Robert, solemnly, at least as solemnly as the ludicrous situation would let him, "I sometimes think there is no reforming of you. I'm no believer in this betting at any time, as you very well know; but as I am unwilling you should go away thinking that, in coming to the resolve of speaking the truth, I am aiming at a saintship you cannot attain to, I am ready to meet your worldly-mindedness at least half way, Sunday night though it be. You don't seem to value a man's word as you would his money?"

"A bet always looks the safe thing to do."

"You mean a safe bet, I suppose."

"Come, come, Robert; no nonsense about any *prima facie*, on my part; you know I never do anything in that line. I have lost more bets than I have ever won, and my prophecies don't count for much when a bet is on. Am I to understand that you are willing to

take up a risk on the stability or instability of your decision to conform to the minister's principles?"

"That depends," answered Robert.

"Depends on what?"

"Depends upon how the money won or lost is afterwards to be spent. I am not unwilling to make sure of my resolution, and to accommodate a worldling like you, even on a Sunday night, by making a bet for the first time and, I trow, the last time, if the proceeds be given to a charity or donated to some good work. Otherwise, I might be thought to have no faith in my courage to carry out my own resolution."

Turnbull was again a different man on seeing his idea so near the realization point.

"All right," he exclaimed, with glee. "Suppose we give the proceeds to the Christian Union. That is surely a channel through which we can purify an act of ours from all worldly-mindedness."

"I have no objection to the institution," said Robert; "if it is worthy of every kind of charitable support."

"Then I bet you a fiver——"

"Five pounds?"

"Yes, five pounds; have you any objection to the amount?"

"Why, you're not worth that much, Willie."

"Never you mind. I'll raise it if it be needed, which I am pretty well assured it won't be."

"Then the *prima facie* principle, if my suspicions of what you mean by that is correct, is not altogether an unknown quantity in your speculation?"

"How can there be any suspicion of the *prima facie*, when there's no personal gain? No, Robert Mow-

bray, I bet you five pounds, on purely public grounds, that you do not continue to speak the truth in all matters for a week continuously, without becoming an inmate of the nearest mad-house, or being considered a fit and proper person to be sent there."

"You've left the jail out, Willie."

"Then you had better include it in your acceptance. As you yourself have hinted, mad or bad, lunatic or criminal."

"Then it is now my turn to be serious," said Robert, taking his comrade's hand for the third time. "I have never been much of a betting man except by way of fun, and never on Sunday. But to stand by the cause of speaking the truth after hearing the sermon we have just been listening to, to stand by such a principle without the least appearance of sanctimoniousness, I am willing even on a Sunday night in the presence of such a worldling doubter as you are, Willie Turnbull, to shake hands with you over the matter. You have doubted my word, and doubted even my oath. So here goes. There seems to be only one way of convincing you that I am in earnest. From this time forth," and the declarant laid emphasis on each word as he shook Willie's hand, "I shall speak the truth on all occasions; and if by the end of the week you find that I have not come under the supervision of the authorities who have the looking after of the insane or the criminal, you will pay over to the Christian Union of Kartdale the sum of five pounds sterling. The better day the better deed is but a poor excuse for such an act as this, though it seems no sillier a plea perhaps, than the one I have advanced in justification

of my acceptance of your challenge. Still it may satisfy my tempter, Mr. Mephisto Turnbull, whose morality, I am afraid, is not of a very high cast, though my own is not much to boast of either. So there's my hand on it. My desire is to show how far I have confidence in myself, as well as in those who decide to do as I propose to do, in reducing the minister's principles to a daily practice, and I hope you, Willie Turnbull, will eventually become one of us. So good-night with you; good-night and pleasant dreams, with an early resolution in the morning to speak the truth under all circumstances during the day."

"Good-night, old fellow," exclaimed Willie; "good-night, and may prosperity go with you. Man, I only wish you could see your way to double the stakes. Good-night, however," and so the two companions parted for the evening.

CHAPTER III.

“ It’s maybe no’ jist what ye like, auld wife,
Pernickity whiles tho’ ye be ;
Sae learn ye the way, nor think to say nay
To a man that turns Turk on a lie, auld wife,—
To a man that has sworn no’ to lie.”

Next morning, young Mowbray, still determined to follow the advice of the minister of Kartdale, even after the most careful self-examination and private deliberation, had not far to go to meet his first temptation. He had spent something of a restless night, with the seriousness of his wakeful moments chasing the ridiculous of his dreams, and as he descended to the breakfast room, where his uncle and aunt were already in waiting, there was hanging over him the uneasiness of a headache, which made the meeting of the tempter on his own terms less of an easy task, perhaps. The tempter was no other than Mr. Fairservice, his uncle, who, whenever the occasion offered, seemed to derive a good deal of gratification from seeing his nephew’s good-nature afloat on the wave of his own banter. No more dreadful tease or quiz was there in Kartdale than the same Mr. Fairservice, at least, so Mrs. Fairservice had been heard declaring frequently enough in the hearing of her visitors.

To make an explanation, which ought to have been made sooner, no doubt, Robert Mowbray had been left an orphan when he was not more than three years of age. An only child, he had been intrusted to the keeping of the Fairservices by the dying breath of his mother, who had survived her husband's commercial ruin and death only about a year. Mr. Fairservice was Robert's mother's brother, and faithfully did he and his motherly affectioned life-partner fulfil their trust in the upbringing of the boy. No mother could have done more for her own child than Mrs. Fairservice did for little Robert Mowbray; and while Mr. Fairservice seldom let slip an opportunity of making merry at his nephew's expense, no one knew better than his wife how much he was built up in the lad, how far he felt towards him the affection of a father towards his own son. In a word, Robert had been taken to the hearts of the old childless couple, even before the death of his mother, and when he was left alone in the world, as it seemed, they felt as if there had at last been bestowed on them the blessing of a child of their own. The education the lad received in the parish school of Kartdale—and what better school education could he have received than at the hands of old Mr. Allen,—was supplemented by a two years' residence at Dollar, before he had been appointed junior salesman in one of the largest of the great drapery establishments in Glasgow. The original idea in Mr. Fairservice's mind in placing his adopted son with such a firm, was that he might there acquire the widest business experience possible, previous to the time of his starting business for himself; but so well

had the young man performed his duty towards his employers that the promotion he had received at their hands all but superseded the uncle's original intention. Before he had reached his twenty-fifth year, Robert's prospects in the firm to which he was attached, had become so bright, that nothing short of a partnership would in all probability fall to him as a final reward for his services. At least, so the most of Kartdale thought as they gossiped about the heir-apparent of Mr. Fair-service, the retired grocer.

After Robert had entered on his apprenticeship in Glasgow, he continued to live with his uncle and aunt in the pleasant villa which the former had erected a short time before he had retired from active service behind the counter. Every lawful day the young merchant went in and out from the city by rail, and on entering the breakfast-room on the Monday morning after coming to his memorable decision, he had more than an hour to spare before setting out for the station.

The usual greetings were exchanged between him and the old people, though the uncle at once noticed while bidding his nephew good-morning, that there was perhaps less than the usual sunshine on Robert's cheerful countenance.

"You are kind o' late this morning, are you not, Robert; every thing a' right wi' ye?"

The greeting was cheerful enough, and the query ample enough, and yet Robert answered it neither cheerfully nor readily. His vow to speak the truth on all occasions, important and unimportant, suddenly came in his way. He was not well enough to declare himself perfectly well, to declare that everything was

all right. The headache he had, when he awoke, had not left him, in fact was growing even more intense every minute. On other occasions, headache or no headache, he would unhesitatingly have answered in the affirmative that everything was all right with him, not only to avoid giving his aunt any uneasiness on his health's account, but perhaps even from a less disinterested motive of escaping the badinage and satirical remarks of the head of the house, who, to look at his healthy complexion and robust contour of body, had probably had few aches of any kind during his lifetime. But to answer in the affirmative in the face of his vow, was to shrink from the consequences of ordeal number one, was to break his solemn pledge at the very outset, and so he remained silent for the moment in regard to his own physical condition, though he contrived to say something about the weather.

But Mr. Fairservice, who had been too long in business,—too long experienced with the eloquence of silence in his bargainings, to be put off in this way, again pressed the query upon his nephew, whether he felt in his usual state of health.

"To be honest wi' ye, though its maybe no the best o' manners to speak o' ither folk's looks, as your auntie whiles says, you do look kind o' white about the gills. What's the matter?"

Though the uncle's tone was still a bantering one, the repetition of the query made Robert's aunt, who was superintending the tea things at the end of the table, look anxiously at her nephew.

"Why, you're no sick, a' ye Robert?" she asked with surprise.

"Oh, there's nothing serious, auntie; it's only a headache;" and the hero of ordeal number one blushed like a person caught in the act of committing an offence, becoming at once self-conscious of what was in store for him from his uncle.

"Only a headache!" exclaimed that gentleman *sotto voce*, with his face behind his newspaper; "only a headache! Hmph!"

"There's naething like a guid strong cup o' tea for a thing o' that kind, as we women folk ken fu' well," said his aunt, giving no heed to her husband's irony, but proceeding to give her nephew the full strength of the teapot.

"Could ye no put a trifle o' pennyroyal or some ither clam-jamfrey o' women's stuff in it, for the puir man?" continued the uncle, shuffling in his chair, as if overburdened with further opinions about the state of his nephew's health. "Just a sniff or sae o' something to regulate the fervour o' a love-sick swain. Dear me, what can the worl' be coming to? Young men hae ailments that were little spoken of in my young days. Only a headache! Dod bless me, to think o't mak's a man bald afore his time," and in this way, having selected for his text the young men of his day, the old merchant ran on for some time at Robert's expense.

After Mrs. Fairservice had given the latter his tea, taking special pains to make it strong and palatable, as she thought, the meal proceeded in silence for a minute or two.

"Have I made your tea agreeable, Robert?" the

aunt asked at length. Another poor simple question politely put and kindly meant, and yet how often it has been the origin of disrespect to the ninth commandment—shall it be said, of more white lies than any other social query.

"Very nice indeed!" was what Robert was proceeding carelessly, to say, when again he remembered his vow, and saw before him ordeal number two.

"It is strong enough, anyway, auntie," was what he did say.

"Ower strong, maybe," again exclaimed Uncle Fair-service, watching his opportunity,—“Ower strong, at least, for a sober-minded invalid wi' a headache, wha ought, like some o' our feckless saints o' modern times, to avoid everything that's strong, even strength o' will to overcome a bit pain in the head.”

Robert, of necessity, stood the banter without retort; not so his aunt.

"There, that'll dae, guidman. Nae mair o' that, gin ye please. Tak' up your attention wi' that newspaper o' yours, and spoil your temper as muckle as you like ower thae politicians ye mak' sic fuss about at times. If you and them are modern saints, it's maybe a guid thing there are some sinners left in the worl', if only to preserve us a' frae gaun clean wud. Argle-bargle wi' them as muckle as ye like, and jist leave the laddie alane. If he hae a headache, it's a guid's blessing it's no yours, or we would be a' hearing about it to a different tune. Besides, I want him to tak' a note o' some things I expect him to bring hame the night frae Glasgow for me. Sae jist mind your newspaper, auld

man, and ne'er fash your bother about modern saints or their headaches."

In this way the kind-hearted matron would often interfere in her nephew's behalf, and on this occasion she succeeded in quieting the tormentor for a little while, as she proceeded to enumerate the articles she wanted. When the list seemed complete, she asked him to read it over.

"You're sure you have taken down everything, Robert?"

"Everything you've mentioned, auntie."

"Dear me, it seems a' right; and yet there is something, I am a' but positive, has been left out."

"There now," she at length exclaimed, "I was sure there was something. The plush, Robert, that's what I was forgetting,—the plush the minister's wife has asked me to order for her. She says she saw some that ye brought out for the Lockheads last week."

Ay, ay, Master Robert Mowbray, is your headache becoming more and more unbearable, or is there another ordeal being prepared for you by the hands of the best friend you have in the world, that you assume such a look? Plush is plush, but little of it is redder than your face as you try to hide your confusion over the correction of the list that had everything in it but the plush for the minister's wife.

"How much of it does she want?" he at length asked, looking up to see how much of his confusion his aunt had seen.

"Oh, only twa yards. Let me see. How muckle will that be? 'Ten shillings, won't it?"

"It is ten shillings a yard," said Robert in a seemingly careless tone.

"Ten shillings? Why, I told her you could get it for five shillings a yard. Fannie Lockhead told me the last time I was ower at their place, that that was what she paid you for it."

Fannie Lockhead! And who is Fannie Lockhead? Or what is Fannie Lockhead to you, Master Mowbray, that you should again look so shamefaced in the presence of your aunt? Are you getting deeper into the whirlpool of ordeal number three—the ordeal of the plush, as your uncle will presently call it, that such a tell-tale rush of blood comes to your face, and all but drives away that headache of yours? What think ye now of your vow to speak the truth at all hazards?

"Wasn't that what you paid for it, Robert?" persevered his aunt, who would have been little short of blind, had she not noticed something of her nephew's confusion.

"No, auntie," answered the young man, rather sheepishly, it must be confessed, but not without the will-mark in his face that his vow was not yet to be broken.

"But didn't you tell Fannie, that sic was the price of it?" again asked Mrs. Fairservice, getting a little red in turn.

"I said she would have to pay five shillings for it."

"And what is the difference, may I ask?" said his aunt, with the sharpness of being annoyed in her words. "It seems to me you are in the way o' hair-

splitting this morning, Robert. I hope ye hae nae intention o' acting unfairly by your ain auntie?"

Mr. Fairservice, though he had taken his rebuff without any immediate attempt at reprisal, had not been so eager, in the meantime, in the pursuit of political knowledge behind his newspaper, as to overlook the colloquy passing between aunt and nephew. A hint of sniff had been heard more than once from behind his thin partition between him and them, but whether it was over something he was reading, or something he was overhearing, was known for the moment, only to himself. At last, peering round the edge of his Herald, with a suspicious-looking twinkle in his eye, he asked his wife, how long it was since she had learned that there was no difference between an auntie and a sweetheart.

"Dod bless me," said he, bursting out in full career of poking fun at both of them, "if I don't believe you're baith blushing like twa haiverils detected in the act o' kissing. Diamond cut diamond, for a saxpence! Is it possible that a woman, wha has been under my guidance, no to say my tuition, for the last forty years or mair, can be sae daft as no to hae found out afore this time, what a sly kind o' person we hae been harbourin' sae lang in our house? If sic roses in your face, guidwife, hae made ye look as bonnie as ye were at seventeen, when I first began to speer your name, and find out about your tocher, the rush o' blood to puir Robert's will nae doubt counteract the dwamin' effects o' that headache o' his. Fannie Lockhead's plush, or the minister's wife's, is likely to be mair efficacious in ae sense, than Mrs. Fairservice's tea."

In presence of a logic of fun of this kind, it was impossible for the nephew to refrain from meeting the merriment half-way, as he proceeded to explain to his aunt in the best way he could, how he had supplemented from his own purse the price Miss Fannie Lockhead was to have paid for the plush that had captured the taste of the minister's wife. And observing how unsatisfactory his explanation was to her, at least how reluctant she seemingly was to re-assume her pleasant looks, he informed her that he had no objection to repeat his liberality in behalf of Mrs. Thomson, seeing his aunt had become somewhat involved in his former double dealing.

All is well that ends well, even if the old uncle could not refrain from chuckling in the most outrageous manner during poor Robert's explanations. Every now and again he would sniff and snicker as if a series of fireworks were going on within him, with a dangerous approach to apoplexy, and when he saw how far his better half refused to be reassured all at once, his facial contortions were all but alarming. But as neither of them knew as yet of their nephew's vow to speak the truth under all circumstances, they were forced to accept his explanations without further remonstrance or ridicule, and say nothing more on the subject of the plush.

For a time the breakfast again proceeded in silence. The old gentleman resumed his newspaper, sipping his tea in the intervals between the paragraphs. The silence was becoming a little awkward, and Robert was on the point of breaking it by asking his aunt if there was anything else he could do for her in the city, when

his uncle, pushing his chair away from the table, brought down his foot with extraordinary emphasis on the floor, and threw his newspaper from him with violence, exclaiming:—

“Deil tak’ the rascal o’ a correspondent to write about an honest citizen in that way. It mak’s a man’s blood boil to read sic ill-natured stuff. I wonder the editor lets trash o’ that kind into his columns.”

“Dear me, Alexander, what’s the matter now?” exclaimed Mrs. Fairservice, “you’re aye either blawing het or cauld about something or ither. What’s gaen wrang now?”

“Matter enough, and wrang enough,” continued her husband, taking a turn or two up and down the dining-room. “Thae fellows are never content unless they’re slanderin’ somebody. It’s maybe no for me to tak’ the man’s part, for he’s no aye unco judicious in the way he thinks o’ some things himsel’. But it’s a shame how they attack and misca’ him. He’s misguided enough at times, there is nae doubt about that, but to say that he’s dishonourable, and unworthy every right o’ citizenship, is little short o’ blasphemy again’ a’ freedom o’ speech and fairplay.”

“But wha is it they’re attacking, Alexander?”

“Jist listen and ye’ll hear wha they’re attacking. Jist read that out, Robert, and pass an opinion on it. Is it no simply disgraceful?”

Robert took up the newspaper, and when his uncle had paused to point out the composition that had disturbed him, went on to read it out aloud, interrupted, as he was, after nearly every sentence by some explosion or other from the old man.

As the reading proceeded, it may as well be here stated, that ever since Robert Mowbray had come to think for himself, he and his uncle had not always been sailing in the same boat, politically speaking. When the former had reached manhood, and began to express an influence of his own in Kartdale as a citizen whose opinions had more or less weight, he was not slow to detect the many prejudices of his guardian. And yet there had never been any unseemly rupture between the two of them in their many discussions of political affairs, whether these discussions extended to the affairs of the kingdom or only of the parish. Robert's forbearance on such occasions was more of a virtue than his uncle's patience, as may be suspected. The former's tact was always sufficient to keep in the background any of those advanced opinions which he knew, only too well, perhaps, would have the same effect upon the latter that the proverbial red-rag has on the male kind of the bovine species. In a word, Mr. Fairservice was a Conservative, as far as he understood the term as a mere party shibboleth. With the strongest of prejudices in favour of the local leaders of that party, he was always ready to take sides with them. If any local improvements happened to be inaugurated under their auspices, he was just as ready to acknowledge them as the keepers of his conscience, as when they happened to oppose local improvements; and knowing this, his politic nephew seldom ventured in his presence to analyze the reputation of these local Conservative leaders or to discuss the enterprise of their opponents. When, therefore, Mr. Fairservice asked him what he thought of the newspaper article

which had excited him, and which Robert was obliged to read aloud from beginning to end, the nephew felt how dangerous such a meeting-place of opinions was likely to be. The conventional method of retreat by a compromise of mere words was now no longer available to him—all compromises being more or less a breaking away from his vow to speak the whole truth.

"A fine article that to be seen in a respectable paper, isn't it? And wha'll say wha's to be next?" the old ex-grocer continued to exclaim, as he took another turn, with his right arm keeping time with his right leg, in his excitement. "Wha's to be the next to come in for the fellow's snash, that's what I would like to ken? Dod bless me, I'm almost inclined to think weel o' the man, auld Radical though he be, as they ca' him, notwithstanding the whigmaleeries o' his past life. But ye don't speak, young man; what's your opinion o' that?"

"I think it's simply disgraceful," answered Robert. "The auld Radical is an honourable man."

"Well, yes; of course he's honourable enough, I hae nae doubt, at least I never kenn'd him dæ a dishonourable act."

'Besides, he is a gentleman of great public spirit; perhaps one of the most disinterested of our public men.'

"Hardly the best though, ye'll allow, Robert, my man. There are public spirited men in Kartdale besides him. Ye don't say onything, but ye ken there are. Now, there is Mr. Johnstone, the provost o' Kartdale, that's to be, as they say. There's a public-

spirited man for ye ! The auld Radical cannae haud a caunle to him. Theres nae misguiding about him, nae bees in his bonnet. What think ye o' that ? The auld Radical is maybe weel enough, but he's no a man o' Mr. Johnstone's stamp, is he now ?"

Robert felt as if he were rushing on to his fate. And yet he had to say something.

"The man has been misguided in at least ane o' his opposition moods, ye'll surely grant that much ?" pressed the uncle.

"He has always been anxious to elevate the status of the working classes."

"Fudge on the working classes. Muckle he cares for the working classes, or ony o' the rest o' ye that oppose the organizing o' a burgh in Kartdale. The burgh is bound to come, and the man that opposes it is neither mair nor less than a fool for his pains ;" and there were not a few danger-signals in the old man's glistening eyes and flushing face.

Robert observed the danger-signals, and at the same time could devise no way of retreat except by keeping silent, though not without a cloud of anxiety coming on his own face.

"Oh, ye may gloom as much as ye like, my man. I am quite capable o' repeating what I hae said. The man, be he young or auld, young Radical or auld Radical, that opposes the proposed burgh improvements for the village, is a born fule. They tell me that you are sympathising wi' the opposition yoursel', Robert Mowbray. Is that sae ?"

"It doesn't matter much what my opinions are, I'm thinking, either about those who favour the change or

oppose it," answered Robert, still intent on temporizing with his uncle's weakness.

"That's no an answer to my question, young man," exclaimed his uncle, with painful emphasis, and evidently drawing nearer every minute to the point of anger. "You're nae langer a wean, and though you're maybe no a householder yet, still we're no a' blind to the influence ye hae amang them that are householders. Sae, ye may as weel speak out your mind as no. Is it your intention or is it no to join the auld Radical and his opposition to the making o' Kartdale a burgh wi' a provost o' its ain? There are mair folk than your uncle would like to ken that."

"I would as soon not answer your question, uncle, at least, for the present."

But the uncle would not take such an answer.

"I thought you had some public spirit, young man; have you nae opinion to express about the matter? Let us hear what ye hae to say for yoursel'."

"Well, then, uncle," answered Robert when he saw there was no safety even in silence, "if you must have an answer, I have only to say that I am most decidedly opposed to the burgh project, or to any other schemes that are likely to increase the burdens of the poor."

"And you intend joining the auld Radical's opposition movement?"

"Whatever little influence I have with the good folks of Kartdale, and very little it is, I must surely exercise honourably. He's a poor stick of a man who tries to run with the hare and hob-nob with the hounds, as I have heard you say yourself, uncle, often enough."

Oh, Robert Mowbray, do you know what you are saying? In for a lamb, in for a sheep, and you surely are in for both now. Do you not know, have you not been able to find out, notwithstanding all your shrewdness and discernment that your uncle has set his heart on being more than a mere retired merchant living at his ease, and unadorned with the civic honours which his fellow-townsmen may be brought to bestow on him? The village has no such honours to bestow, but the burgh of Kartdale will,—baillieships and provostships, not to mention the minor dignity which leads to these, of having a seat at the Town Council. And yet what good would it have done you, had you known of such a lurking ambition in the old man's breast, or what favour would it have brought you had you even been sure that he was hand and glove with the coterie of the weel-daein' who have met every other evening for some weeks past, in the Cross Keys, to discuss the project of making Kartdale a burgh—with "the men of the first campaign" as they came to be called,—for have you not taken upon yourself a vow never again to swerve from the duty of speaking the truth, eschewing everything in the shape of white lies and black lies, positive inuendos and negative inuendos, exaggerations in fun and exaggerations in earnest, nay, every kind of prevarication and deception, direct or indirect, in thought, word or action? No, sir, you cannot even as much as look at your watch, as you once might have done, and advance as an excuse the impending danger of your losing your train, for well you know that such would be an excuse and no

valid reason, a kind of deception perhaps of a mild form, but none the less a falsehood.

As it happened, Robert's honest, unimpassioned answer set his old uncle all but beside himself with excitement. The thought that one so near to him should think of opposing any pet scheme of his, was sufficient to arouse in him the most violent passion. Suddenly starting to his feet again, he jerked himself from the one end of the room to the other, sometimes with his right arm keeping time with his right leg, as he brought his foot down on the floor with a thud, at other times rubbing his head all over with both hands, as if he were tearing his hair, and fidgetting in every muscle of his body. There was no mistaking his excitement. His second mood had come upon him, the mood in which his temper always got the better of him.

Mrs. Fairservice saw what was coming and tried to throw oil upon the waters, but it was only like throwing oil upon flames.

"The burdens o' the puir!" he shouted, as he strode about the room with that peculiar pace of his in which the right foot was always emphatic. "The burdens o' the puir!" and he sniffed the phrase as if he would sniff his own anger out with the sarcasm. "And pray, Mister Robert Mowbray, what dae you ken about the burdens o' the puir? Have ye ever had ony o' their burdens to bear in your lifetime? But bring up a kitten and the cat may scratch ye. It's the way o' the worl', and what need folk expect? Indeed, I hae been haein' my suspicions o' late. I hae been jalousing for some time back, that your sympathies were kittlin' wi'

the fules o' the place, that haenae even the sense o' a cat, or they would see at ance the advantages o' haein' our village made into something to be proud o'; I suppose you hae even been gaein' to their meetings at night, and fraternizing wi' auld Radicals an' young Radicals, and ither sic thowless rascals that wouldnae dae a hand's turn for their native place. But let me tell ye, young man, that it ill becomes ony nephew o' mine to talk to me in my ain house, about the burdens o' the puir, or to mak' a beggarly excuse for a' sic Radical clap-traps, while contradicting me to my very face," and the old man was by this time both purple and breathless.

"But, uncle, you know,"—interrupted Robert.

"No sir, I don't know. I know naething that may be in your mind about onything that's wise. Ye may gang your ain gaet in thinking as ye dae about this burgh business. It's a' ane to me. The rising generation are nae better than a set o' idle haverils, Radicals the maist o' them and ne'er-do-wells, wha are ready to tak' a' they can get frae ye, and are just as ready to turn their back on you when ye're trying to dae the best ye can for them. A' that I can say is, I'm no likely to stand being contradicted to my face in my ain house."

"But, dear me, Alexander, Robert didnae contradict you," said Mrs. Fairservice, getting in a word at last. "Ye asked him a question——"

"A civil question," still shouted the irate uncle.

"Well, a civil question, gin ye like; and he returned you——"

"An uncivil answer."

"Come, come, uncle, that's hardly fair," said Robert.

"It isn't? Didnae you throw the burdens o' the puir in my face, as if I had been guilty o' bringing on them some o' thae same burdens?"

"You must have mistaken me. I only spoke of the burdens of the poor, incident on the proposed increased taxation, should the village be made a burgh. There was nothing personal in my remark."

"But I tell you there was, sir."

"I beg your pardon, uncle; but there was not, if you will allow me. You began the conversation about the auld Radical——"

"The auld scoundrel ye had better ca' him."

"Oh, Alexander!" again interrupted Mrs. Fair-service.

"Yes, ye may 'Oh Alexander' as much as ye like; I ken what I am saying. Maybe ye would like to be a Radical tae. There's nae saying what some women folk'll dae, when they tak' the pairt o' fules," and the old man still kept prancing with his excited stride from one end of the room to the other, as full of ire as ever.

"I dinnae think women are as unjust as some men can sometimes be."

"Dae ye accuse me, woman, o' being unjust?"

"I think I safely may, guidman."

"And I suppose you, Mister Radical are o' the same way o' thinking. Oh ye neednae hesitate. Out wi' what ye've got to say. Silence gi'es consent, and I can fairly see how it is' and the expectant councillor of Kartdale fairly boiled over in his increasing excitement of manner. "It's a' o' a piece. The worl's the worl' and nae mistak'. Even your ain'll rise up again'

ye, gin ye gie them time enough to grow ungrateful. But ye may plot and plan, and plan and plot, in the house and out the house; ye may contradict me to my face, and ca' me unjust and a' the names ye can think o', but tak' my word for it, we'll be even wi' ye a' yet. Radicals or no Radicals, ye'll see nae white feathers about us. The burgh'll come in spite o' a' the Radicals in the place, and in spite o' a' the deevils as weel," and he made as if he would rush out of the room. "It's no for the like o' me to swear," he shouted, as he turned at the door with the handle in his grasp, "but an angel himsel' would swear at the deil-begotten, cantankerous thrawn-in-the-neck, ungrateful pests o' society that would far raither gang the wrang road than the right ane, my ain kin amang the rest. But ne'er ye doubt, tak' my word for it, we'll be even wi' ye a' yet, yes, even wi' auld Radicals and young Radicals. The burgh is sure to come, in spite of the witless cuifs that would keep it back, and contradict a man to his face in his ain house forbye. Jist to think that a man should be insulted under his ain roof-tree!" and Mr. Fairservice strode at last out of the room, slamming the door behind him in his rage.

When the climax had thus been reached, aunt and nephew could only look at one another with a kind of helpless stare.

"Dear me, Robert," said the former, at last, after a pause of two or three minutes, "it's no often ye get your uncle into siccan a rage. What could hae come ower ye that ye couldnae gie him his ain way about that burgh business he has sae set his heart upon?"

Without reply, Robert rose from the breakfast table to leave for his train.

"What an awfu' thing it would be for you to quarrel in that way wi' ane anither mair than ance. Had ye no better leave a word wi' me for him, jist to appease him like, saying ye didnae mean a' ye said about the burgh?"

Mrs. Fairservice looked appealingly at her nephew, while her tones were the usual coaxing of a mother.

"I can hardly do that, auntie," answered Robert, "for I'm thinking I did mean all that I said on that score, though I didnae intend to annoy my uncle."

"But ye see ye hae annoyed him."

"I see he is annoyed, and I'm sorry——"

"But will you and he tak' different ways about this burgh matter? Can ye no say ye don't oppose it?"

"I can hardly say that."

"Gie into him in the meantime, ony way."

Robert was silent.

"Oh, jist for my sake."

Robert wavered.

The temptation was strong.

Besides, it was only a trifling thing. Some would be sure to call him a fool for his stubbornness.

"I'm willing to say that I'm sorry for his being annoyed," said the nephew, remembering his vow, "but further than that it is not possible for me to go without telling a lie."

"Not even for my sake?"

"No, my dear auntie, not even for your sake."

"Then, Robert Mowbray, I'm afraid I hae made something o' a mistak' about my ain nephew—I was

maist gaun to say, in my ain bairn. Never mind, laddie, ye had better rin for your train. I hardly ken what to think o' ye this morning. First, there is that headache o' yours; maybe it has had something to dae wi' your kind o' queerness. Then your tea was no to your taste, and that maitter o' the plush for the minister's wife, and last of a', your camstrairteness wi' your uncle. Dear me, Robert, I hope there's naething serious the maitter wi' ye. Gang awa to your train, laddie, or ye'll maybe be daft enough to lose it wi' a' your haiverin' this morning."

It is hardly necessary to say that Robert Mowbray was only too glad to run for his train.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Frae the bad to the warst, ye would say, auld wife,
Gangs the man that rins frae his trade ;
Sae stick to your last, and jouk frae the blast
O’ the ethics that thinks to rin raid, auld wife,
O’ the laws that are social self-made.”

The thoughts which kept tumbling and tossing one after another in Mr. Robert Mowbray’s mind, as he hastened through the streets of Kartdale and across the square, on his way to the railway station, were, as may readily be conjectured, none of the pleasantest. If, as the minister had maintained in his discourse, honesty was the best policy, it was none the less a hard policy,—anything but a prosperous policy in its immediate effects. With his first experiences of the day pressing before him in his mind, it was impossible for him to look with anything but foreboding at the possible issue of his resolution to speak the truth at all hazards. The giving annoyance to anyone was no natural characteristic of the young man; and to have given annoyance to those whom he cared for most in the world and who, as he had every reason to believe cared for him to the same extent, was, as he could not but consider, a very serious matter indeed. With a little finesse he might surely have escaped his uncle’s

wrath and indignation. He had done so frequently before, indeed had by a little caution and a ready rounding off of his uncle's own opinions, succeeded in keeping upon the best of terms with him up to the present moment. But how was the new principle by which he was going to guide his life about to work in his domestic relationship with those who had done so much for him? How was he going to escape the effects of his uncle's idiosyncracies in future, should he continue to express his opinions openly and above board in the old man's presence? Even his aunt had become annoyed with him for not agreeing to tell what would have been a gross untruth. He had not intended to offend. His aunt and uncle surely knew that. Then why had they been offended? Was it the truth itself that had offended them? Was Willie Turnbull right after all? Was the truth really distasteful to people? Was he going to gain or lose his bet?

"Bet be hanged," said he to himself, as he jerked his shoulders downwards and brought his closed fists against his legs, while he pushed his way across the square. "Who cares for the bet, if the principle be a sound one, a principle which no man should betray? What does the loss of a paltry five-pound note matter, if a man incurs the loss in doing his duty? The principle enunciated by the minister is surely worth sacrificing a little for, since no one can say it is not a sound one."

And yet, when Robert again began to think of the domestic disquietude his lack of tact had been the means of provoking in his uncle and aunt's household,

it was impossible for him to dispel the cloud of disquietude on his own face. As he hurried along to the railway station, giving greeting to his many friends and acquaintances on the streets through which he had to pass, he was unable to rid himself of an irksome feeling of unrest of both mind and body, which though partly suppressed, could not escape those with whom he happened to come in contact.

At length as he turned the last corner at the foot of the declivity which led to the railway station, whom should he meet, but his friend Mr. William Turnbull—the man perhaps of all others whom he would rather not have met just at that moment. But there was no escape.

“Well, old man,” shouted the irrepressible Willie, “how goes the exponent of all that is truthful this morning?” and he shook Robert’s hand with his usual warmth. “Why, dear me, my pious friend,” said he, as he whirled his walking cane in the air, and smiled all over, as if he hadn’t a care in the world, which possibly he hadn’t, “you don’t seem to be at your brightest this morning. Ah, that’s better. Nothing like a smile on such a smiling morning. Sweet smiling morn, eh! and the rest of it. But the smile only came when I brought it. Anything wrong? You were looking rather sad a minute ago. I saw you round the corner. Well, no, I couldn’t do that; but as you came round the corner, I could see that you had a face on as long as my arm. Anything the matter with you? Have you already come to find that to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but

the truth, is too heavy a burden for any man to carry about in his poor soul?"

"If I should find speaking the truth such a burden," answered Robert, returning hurried greeting to his friend, "the lightness, not to say frivolity, of your surmise hardly points you out as the person to whom I would apply to share my trouble."

"Then you have been having your first experience already, eh?" asked Willie, drawing a second bow at a venture.

"Who told you that?" and Robert himself seemed to find an emphasis in every word of his query, which he was unable to suppress.

"Why, I see it in your face."

"You do," continued Robert, with the blood rushing to his forehead. Then suddenly restraining himself he tried to reply in less excited tones. "Your discernment, Willie, is evidently quickened this morning by your last night's indiscretion in betting on the wrong side. You surely haven't been round by the Cross Keys as early as this in the morning."

"Ne'er a Cross Keys, my good man. And discernment or no discernment, discretion or indiscretion, the blindest mowdiwart would readily see that there's something gone wrong with you this morning. Something has excited you."

"Then, you're sure you're not off your eggs?"

"No sir, I'm not off my eggs; and don't you be thinking, Mr. Robert Mowbray, to draw the wool over my eyes. To attempt such a thing is not far from the boundary line of that lie-land you have decided to give a wide berth to in the future."

"Do you mean to accuse me, sir, of acting a lie?" and Robert's demeanour was that of an angry man, a very unusual thing in him.

"Well, no, perhaps, not altogether that, old man," answered Willie, somewhat more quietly, seeing the mood Mowbray was in; "and, my dear fellow, you needn't be so snappish with your bosom friend of a Monday morning, even if something has happened to you."

"Men that make bets on Sunday which they are likely to lose on Monday, are hardly to be depended upon when they make a diagnosis of their opponent's feelings. The tipsy man generally thinks everybody fou but himself."

"Don't you bother about me, Robert Mowbray; I'm neither fou nor foolish, and my bet is quite safe."

"That is, you think it is safe?"

"No, *bon ami* mine, I am sure it is safe."

"You are?"

"Yes, sir."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, and you neednae be offended at me for saying it a second time;—An excited man is never very far from being on the road to——"

Mr. Turnbull was discreet enough to pause for a second, as he looked into his friend's eyes.

"On what road, if you please?" exclaimed Robert, and there was even a more intensified snap in his every word than perhaps either his friend or anybody else had ever heard before.

If Robert Mowbray was not mad, he was certainly not far from being out and out angry.

"Oh, never mind; it's all right, Robert," said Willie.

"But it isn't all right," exclaimed Mowbray; "and let me tell you I do mind. I mind a great deal, and what is more, I mind so much that I wish other people would mind their own business, as I try to do."

There could be no mistake about the matter now. Robert Mowbray was really angry. And Willie Turnbull was only able to answer him at first with a pianissimo breathing between his curved lips that had the faintest semblance to a whistle.

Then having moved on a step or two, Willie raised his face at an angle of forty-five degrees with the plane of the brae they were ascending, and said as if to the whole world:—

"Isn't anger said by the Latin Grammar to be a short——"

But before he had time to finish the sentence, Robert Mowbray had rushed past him as if in the greatest haste to catch his train.

"The plot, methinks, seems to thicken already for the man who would retail the truth and nothing but the truth in his ordinary walk and conversation," exclaimed the histrionic Willie in true Micawber style, as he whirled his cane in the air, and stood watching the retreating form of the friend he had seen angry for the first time. "Verily, the path of the truthful man, like the course of the truth-seeker, is set with thorns."

Nor had his friend escaped the worst of the thorns. Before he arrived at his warehouse that morning he was to learn by experience how the ways of men run

through the most prickly thickets of prevarication. A second adventure awaited him at the railway station.

On reaching the platform, there was the usual quiet bustle of persons waiting for this, the most convenient of the morning trains from Kartdale to Glasgow. A short distance from the usual groupings of travellers, stood one who bore the stamp of nobility in his mien and dignified movements, and whom Robert at once recognized as Lord Clay, of Clay Castle, the owner of the richest estate in the neighbourhood of Kartdale. How he came to be at Kartdale Station had become something of an enigma to the bystanders, who seldom took their eyes off his lordship for more than a minute at a time; for there was a station nearly three miles away that was very much nearer to Clay Castle than Kartdale station, and which, as everybody knew, was the one from which those coming from the Castle usually took train to the great western metropolis. Could anything be amiss? Had his lordship merely taken the longer drive as a recreation? He could hardly have had business thus early in Kartdale, and as he seldom or never passed through Kartdale unless he had business at some of the banks, he must have had some other reason for taking the roundabout way. In every village the most of its people are seldom disinclined to trouble themselves about small matters, when there is nothing more serious to discuss, and thus it was that the villagers of Kartdale who were at the station on their way to Glasgow that morning, could not refrain from puzzling themselves over this unusual and early appearance of Lord Clay in their midst.

Lord Francis Clay, of Clay Castle, was naturally

enough an object of interest to the lieges of Kartdale. Whenever his carriage happened to pass through the town, there were few doorsteps to be found vacant, few windows without expectant faces near the casement, few tongues that did not wag for the hundredth time over his idiosyncracies, as his equipage disappeared down the street. Nor was there any dearth of anecdote or illustrative criticism of the nobleman's irascibility, pride, vindictiveness, and parsimony, not to mention a score or more of other characteristics which he may or may not have possessed. The refraction which village ethics gives to the rays of truth is a subtle effect which no historian can afford to overlook. As Robin Drum once said to Jeames in the session-house, "While in Kartdale the sma'est event cannae happen without being commented on, there's a guid deal commented on that 'ill never happen, nor can happen." In other words, tradition is a very uncertain medium. And just as the many stories which Jeames and Robin Drum were accustomed to retail about Lord Clay and his ways of dealing with men, had to be taken *cum grano salis*, so has the writer of these Chronicles found some difficulty in establishing to his own satisfaction the true character of the seigneur of Kartdale, even when it has been pickled with his own honest desire to make the worst appear the better reason in such cases.

That he was irascible, nobody had ever occasion to doubt; and that he was angry, very angry, at something or other on the morning Robert Mowbray happened to meet him at Kartdale station, few could fail to detect after examining, even cursorily, his clouded face and

restless manner. No wonder then that those going on the train had been brought to discuss among themselves what possibly could be amiss, no wonder that Robert Mowbray would have willingly refrained from placing himself in the nobleman's way when he saw the humour he was in. He had had enough of fireworks that morning.

Yet, as things turned out, he was not to escape. There was a church acquaintance, an acquaintance by sight, between the nobleman and Mr. Fairservice's nephew, which had to be acknowledged by both, and as Robert raised his hat to Lord Clay, the latter made a movement as if he would like to speak to him.

"I have just been asking the station-master if he knows my sons," said his lordship, coming forward and placing his hand on Robert's shoulder. "You're Mr. Fairservice's nephew, are you not?"

Robert bowed in the affirmative.

"Ah, yes, I thought so; I have seen you at church, I think; I suppose you know my sons. Of course you do. There cannot be many people in Kartdale who do not know the vagabonds. Well," continued his lordship, "the pair of them are likely to be on this train; at least I would like to find out whether they are or not. Would you mind running along the platform when the train comes in, and find out for me? The station-master says it will not move out for a few minutes after its arrival, seeing the engine takes in water here."

Robert again bowed to his lordship in the most respectful manner, and said that he would be glad to be of any service thus required of him.

"To tell you the truth," said the lordship, becoming as confidential in his manner as he could well be, being a nobleman,—perhaps more confidential than he would otherwise have been had he not been in a bit of a temper with somebody or other, "the young rascals have stolen a march on me this morning, but I think I can play them a prank worth two of theirs. Then there's that confounded bank they have telegraphed me about, as if there wasn't bother enough in this world for a man to worry over without having a new worry every morning. Everything seems to be going to the very deuce this morning," and after a manner of its own his lordship's anger continued to give way in a kind of soliloquy which Robert was probably not expected to hear.

"By the way," said he, addressing Robert directly, "you haven't heard any news this morning about any impending commercial catastrophe, have you?"

Robert said he had not been in the way of hearing any news that morning, as he had just come from breakfast.

"Well, perhaps, so much the better. Perhaps there's nothing in it after all. Besides, I don't suppose, if you are like other young folks I know, you are likely to be very much worried over other people's losses, even if a hundred banks were to go crash; at least these two young gentlemen of mine didn't seem disturbed enough over the telegram I received this morning, to put off a day's galavanting in the city on its account. But never mind, my fine fellows!" and Sir Francis seemed to shake his temper in the direction the train had to come, "you are not likely to escape my super-

vision so readily. You'll hardly expect to meet your father so soon after starting on your cantrips."

Then again turning to young Mowbray, he addressed him directly. "I think somebody has told me you are in business in Glasgow?"

Robert once more bowed in the affirmative, and said that he was employed in the warehouse of Macpherson, McLean & Company."

"Ah," exclaimed Lord Clay, with something like surprise in his manner, "that's the firm you're connected with, is it? And yet you have heard nothing about commercial trouble in the city. You're not a partner in the concern, are you?"

Well, no, Robert Mowbray was not a partner in the great firm of Macpherson, McLean & Company, as he modestly replied with a smile. Some people had flatteringly hinted to him that such a prospect was before him,—a prospect which he had always, however, jokingly compared to the outlook of the astronomer gazing at the planet Mars, without the hope of ever being sure of its landscapes.

"Well, I am glad to hear it," continued Lord Clay. "Your uncle will be glad too, I have no doubt, when the crash comes, if it is to come. I wish we all were as safe, that is to say if there is to be any sudden trouble. But here comes the train at last. Now for the rascals! You will tell me at once, if you please, should you find them in any of the carriages. All right. You needn't say anything about that bank business until we hear more about it. McLean is one of the directors, and possibly they will be able to tide over the difficulty; at least I hope so. The denouement

will be made soon enough. Bad business for everybody, confounded bad business. Ah, there is the train; now, if you please," and Lord Clay dismissed Robert to examine the railway carriages to see if his sons were in any of them.

The task was not a very difficult one, for Robert, running to the end of the train where the first-class carriages were, had looked into but few of the compartments before discovering the two Clays comfortably ensconced in one of them. Nor was it until he had made his discovery that he began seriously to reflect on the part he was expected to play in the matter and its probable results. He had only thought of obeying Lord Clay, without considering the offence he was about to give his sons.

Nevertheless, there was nothing for him now to do but to keep his promise with the father, no matter who should be offended. There was no time for him to draw back. Besides, the sons need not know how far their father had compromised them.

Robert consequently drew near the door of the compartment in which the young Clays were seated, but he had hardly placed his fingers upon the handle of the door, when he was surprised in such a way as almost to forget the presence of the young men.

"How do you do, Mr. Mowbray?" was the greeting he received from the sweetest of voices, as he was proceeding to open the door—a voice with the musical tremour of youth in it, as there suddenly appeared at the carriage window a face whose roses one could hardly suppose to be all of the morning's freshness,—a handsome face, as Robert had to think even in the

short space he had to do it in, in which there was the comeliness of true maidenhood, the dignity that comes from a higher intelligence and the good breeding of a gentle upbringing.

"Ah, how do you do, Miss Glencairn?" returned Robert, taking off his hat with not a little tremulousness in his manner. "I did not see you in the carriage as I came along. I beg your pardon, but will you allow me for a moment?" and when the sweet comely face withdrew, he opened the door.

As he looked into the carriage, again taking off his hat to the young lady, without showing any inclination to enter, the two Clays turned their eyes towards him.

"You will excuse me, gentlemen, if you please, but I think Lord Clay is looking for you," he said, with a bow in their direction.

The two young men exchanged looks with one another.

"Where is he?" they asked, not without some trepidation.

"He's on the platform, a little nearer the engine."

"Has he asked for us?" queried the elder, with as much dignity as he could command.

"He asked me before the train came in, if I would find out whether you were on it or not."

The two young men again exchanged looks as if in further consultation as to what was to be done.

Then the younger Clay asked if his father was going on the train, that is, if he was on his way to Glasgow.

"I think he is travelling in that direction," answered Robert.

"Ah, really now," exclaimed the elder, looking at the young lady and then at Mowbray; "it is very inopportune, but, really now, there is no help for it, I'm sure," and there was an increasing hesitancy in the young man's haw-haws. "By the way, Mowbray, I think that's your name, dear me so it is, how should I forget it; but would you really mind telling father that we shall probably meet him at Glasgow?"

"I cannot very tell him you are not here, gentlemen," answered Robert, though there was no offence in his manner.

"Well, no, not exactly that, you know; but you may put him off for the moment, just to oblige us."

The upholder of the truth made no reply, but gently closing the door, again took off his hat to Miss Glencairn.

"So you're not going to Glasgow this morning, Mr. Mowbray?" said the young lady, with a smile that made the young man's heart beat at a fever pace.

"Oh yes I am, but you know I always travel second class; our season tickets——" but there was no time to enter into an explanation why he had not taken a seat in the first class carriage, when Lord Clay came up to him.

"Have you found them?" he exclaimed.

"They're on the train, my lord."

"Whereabout?"

Robert would willingly have done anything in reason to shield the young men, especially in the presence of a lady, and his lordship was not slow to suspect the rising inclination in the young man's heart, while his own anger was gathering for a storm-burst.

"Come, come, Master Cashclinker, no humbug with me; stand out of my way. They're in there, are they not? What, you won't say? You're a deceiver like the rest of them, eh? Then may my curse descend upon the generation of rascallions such—Oh, oh, so there you are, young gentlemen," shouted his lordship, taking a second breath after wrenching the door open. "There you sit, in all your dignity and in the luxury of a first-class carriage too. Come out of that, come out at once, or by all the moultings that ever robbed the finest of peacocks of their feathers, I'll have you carried out by the guard and the station-master. Yes, come out; the idea of two such spendthrifts as you lolling in first class coaches is enough to sicken a pauper—two gentlemen at large, while your poor old mother is starving at home."

The confusion of the young men can hardly be imagined. Perhaps it was well for them that the train started just as they were thus forced to exchange places with their whimsical parent, though it would perhaps have been better for all parties concerned had they not been obliged to find refuge in the second class carriage which Mr. Robert Mowbray had taken, when he left their noble father in the midst of his violence.

The train was already in motion, as they leaped to their seats, and the guard slammed the door behind them. They were both breathless with suppressed passion, as well perhaps from the haste they had to make in preventing themselves from being left behind, as from their outraged feelings. When their eyes fell upon Mowbray, their rage became as violent against him as their father's had seemingly been against them.

Their haw-haw manners had completely disappeared.

"You contemptible beast," shouted the elder, hissing the words between his teeth, "do you think we are going to put up with such insults at your hands? Confound you, what do you mean by such conduct?" and he gripped the riding-whip cane he had in his hand, as if he would like to strike Robert. "If it weren't for some things I know about you, I would like to wring your neck for you, such a sneaking brute as you are!"

"Better pitch him out of the window," shouted the younger. "Such a miserable sneak is not fit to breathe the air with a dog. Let him have your whip, Algy. Confound the fellow, I would like to kick him myself."

In the midst of such violent language, Robert Mowbray determined to repel any attempt at an attack, and yet, while he felt the impetuous blood rushing to his head, he made every effort to restrain his rising temper as he looked his opponents straight in the face.

"Gentlemen, you are labouring under a serious mistake," was all he said by way of reply to their vituperation.

"Would you excuse yourself by another lie?" shouted Algy.

"I have lied to no one in this matter," answered Robert, stoutly.

"You have."

"I have not."

"What do you call it then? Perhaps you have another name for it; or perhaps you think sneaking about other people's affairs is a virtue."

"Pitch the dog out," shouted the younger; "have no

more words with the scoundrel,—the wretch; if you only give me your whip I'll break every bone in his body; pitch the body of him out of the window."

But Mr. Robert Mowbray was not a man to be so summarily and repeatedly threatened, even by the lordlings of Clay Castle. To be called a sneak and a liar will rouse the temper of any man to rush in great floods of energy to his muscles, no matter how many are pitted against him. And so it was with Mowbray. He had finally reached the point of being regardless of consequences, relying only for self-protection upon that skill which he had acquired in the art of self-defence in his earlier days.

"Gentlemen," said he, raising his voice, and at the same time bracing himself in the corner of the carriage for a coming struggle, "if your blows are as harmless and childish as your threats, nobody has any reason to be afraid of them. And let me tell you further, that if you do not apologize for your shameful language to me since you entered this carriage, after I have made explanation to you for the second time how I came to be looking for you on the train at the instance of your father, I shall not only report you for insulting a passenger, at the next station, but, if need be, to the police authorities at Glasgow when we arrive. And bear this in mind, I am not like either of you, I mean what I say."

"Then take that for your impudence, you unmanly scoundrel," and crash came the elder Clay's cane in the direction of Robert's face.

But Mowbray was not unprepared for the attack. Dexterously checking the blow with his left arm, he

seized the weapon with his right hand, broke it over his knee, and then threw the pieces out of the window, just as the younger of the two was rushing in to supplement his brother's action. The game was two to one; but with further dexterity Robert met the attack of both by placing himself in the passage-way between the two seats, so that he had his assailants one behind the other.

"You had better stand back," he cried, "or it will be the worse for both of you."

But the elder, continuing to press forward, struck him on the shoulder. In an instant the melee began, and almost in an instant it was over. As it afterwards appeared to Robert when he spoke of the encounter, it was over almost before he had time to plan anything, with both of the Clays huddled in a heap on the floor.

"As soon as I saw the plight into which my enemies had fallen," he was accustomed to say afterwards, when telling the story, "I went to their assistance, only to find that my first blow had deprived the elder brother of his senses, while the young one lay under his body with his face jammed against the seat. You may be sure I was not a little alarmed at the issue of the encounter. I knew we were not very far from the next station—only ten minutes or so—and if the guard paid us a visit then, there was no end of trouble in store for us, probably for me more than the others. I managed to stretch Algernon on the seat, and even assisted Archie to get up. His face was very much bruised, while the blood was trickling from his nose. I hardly knew what I said, something about its being a pity that men who ought to be friends should be

breaking the peace in this way. Archie was more frightened than I was, and I think I see his excitement even yet, as he tried to restore his brother to consciousness."

The process of recovery, however, was not anything more tedious than Mowbray's mode of attack. Before reaching the next station, the elder brother opened his eyes, and, sitting up suddenly like one in his sleep, stared around him.

"All right, old man," exclaimed the other. "How do you feel? Come now, there's no use in getting angry again. We have been damaged enough for one morning. I guess we had better get off at the next station. What do you think? It's no use thinking of going to Glasgow in this plight. The train is slowing up. Better brace yourself up, old chappie, and let us get out of this. Never mind me, it's only a scratch. We can tidy up at the George; a drop of brandy will do you good. You can have your innings again. No, no, we can't go on. You don't want to see the old man with an eye like that. Come, that's a good fellow. Ah, there's the station. Now, then, lean on my arm. The guard will open the door for us. Thank you. Now, careful, Algy. All right," and so the two Clays departed, without asking further explanation from Robert Mowbray.

CHAPTER V.

“ There’s love in the win’, ye would say, guid wife,
An’ what’s there to rue, gin there be ?
Ye’ll surely ne’er say, now that ye’ve had your day,
That love rins to seed in a lie, guid wife,
That love has in’t ocht o’ a lie.”

The rest of the journey to Glasgow, as may readily be surmised, was not in every respect a very pleasant one to the victorious champion of the truth, as he lay back in the corner of his compartment, making the most of his own reflections. For a minute or two after the train had started, he had been interrupted by the guard, who, running along the foot-board, looked in at his window to make enquiries about his condition. Meeting each other on the train nearly every day, they had come to exchange greetings, after the manner of acquaintances, and it was with some anxiety in his good-natured face, that the trainman asked if his Kartdale friend was hurt.

“ Not at all,” answered Robert, and at once he proceeded to explain, in as few words as possible, how the thing had happened.

“ I kind o’ suspected that had been the way o’t,” said the friendly guard. “ The big chap looks pretty badly broken up, and sae does the wee fellow, for that matter.

I trust for your sake, if no for my ain, they'll mak' nae mair fuss about the affair. Thae big-wigs are kittle cattle to deal wi', and gin they set the magistrate on ane's track, they can gie us annoyance enough and to spare. Do ye think they left in the mind o' makin' a complaint against you? Gin they dae sic a thing, you'll jist hae to jouk the constable on your way back to Kartdale this evening."

When the guard had disappeared, leaving behind him such a legacy of foreboding, young Mowbray could hardly be expected to keep away from a more or less melancholy review of the events of the morning. The count against him was seemingly rolling up. And yet, when he had fully discussed his position, he felt less inclined than ever, perhaps, to betray the vow he had taken to follow his minister's advice, whatever ethical discrepancy there might for the moment appear between the good old man's theory and the following of it out, whatever disadvantage there would be to him who could persevere in reducing it to practice. If he had met with trouble, he had found a blink of sunshine in the trouble; for though it is, perhaps, nobody's business to inquire into such matters, he could hardly have found it other than a relief from the more sombre incidents of the morning, to meet with such a bright welcome from the young lady whom he had greeted as Miss Glencairn.

According to village gossip, there had existed, or perhaps only ought to have existed, some kind of an undefined sympathy between Mr. Robert Mowbray and Miss Glencairn, the heiress of Middleton, which the quidnuncs had for long suspected would develop in

time into a still stronger feeling. When questioned as to the ground of their expectation, they seldom had more than the usual formula to fall back upon,—“Well, of course, we don’t know for certain, but just you wait and you will see whether there is anything in what we say or not; some folk can never see beyond their ain door-cheek.”

And so something of a rumour, associating the names of Robert Mowbray and Miss Glencairn, had run its course in Kartdale, until drowned in an atmosphere of gossip of seemingly more substance, which bore on its surface the announcement that the former was engaged to be married to Miss Fannie Lockhead, a young lady of whom, by the way, the reader may remember mention has already been made in connection with old Mr. Fairservice’s irony.

Whether Miss Glencairn’s pleasant greeting and winsome smile brought to Mr. Robert Mowbray’s heart any regret, or hope, or comfort, only after events can reveal. Many of these kindly-hearted people, who measure everyone’s good fortune by the cash balance in its favour, were unable at times to refrain from expressing their misgivings that Robert Mowbray had failed to see where his better interest, not to say his better half, was to be found. Miss Fannie Lockhead was all very well in her way, the folk of Kartdale would often say, indeed, nobody could have very much to say against her. She was pretty, if there was anything in that, yes, perhaps one of the prettiest of the young ladies of the village, with her sweet, oval, dimpled face, her pink and white complexion, her bright blue eyes, her beautiful hair, and all that sort of thing. She was

even active in her duties, a good little housekeeper as everybody knew, and, oh, yes, pleasant enough in her manners, a very attractive kind of person, if you were minded to have it so. But—and who does not know what a “But” with a capital letter, in village ethics portends,—how was it possible for anyone to compare such a chit of a thing with Miss Glencairn, a lady who had more than all her good looks, was ever so much more dignified in her bearing, was better born, and, if all stories were true, had at least five hundred a year in her own right, as well as the beautiful villa of Middleton, which had been bequeathed to her by her father. The thing was preposterous. Why, Miss Glencairn was a lady, an educated lady, one whom everyone was inclined to look up to. She knew what the world was. It was now over four years since she had been left an orphan in the world, and everybody was loud in their praise of the ability she had shown in managing her own affairs. Whereas, as to Fannie Lockhead,—well, she is a clever enough little woman; nobody really ever wanted to say a word against her, but, as you know, she is one of a very large family. Of course her family is pretty well off, but a man who is only pretty well off, is hardly in a position to give a very large dowry to each of his daughters. To marry her would only be to marry a poor woman; and it is simply a mystery how Mr. Fairservice’s nephew had come to make the selection he evidently had determined upon making.

Whether anything of the gossip about him and Miss Glencairn had ever reached Robert Mowbray’s ears, it is not in anyone’s power to say. Even what he was

thinking about, as the train rushed on its way to the great city, cannot be other than the merest conjecture to us and our readers. We all know what volumes our thinking-machines can spin out, when our brains have been shaken up by physical excitement, and after his morning's experience, Robert Mowbray must have put in a good half-hour's troublous thinking before the train began to slacken its speed near the village station in the outskirts of the city, where the tickets were punched or collected.

"Tickets, please !" shouted the guard, as he looked into the compartment where Robert Mowbray sat alone.

"Ye had better gang furrit, I'm thinkin' ;" said the honest man, with a twinkle in his eye, that was perhaps nearer being a wink than a twinkle. "If ye're lonesome, I'm sure sae is she."

Young Mowbray darted an unmistakably angry point of interrogation from his frowning eyes.

"Yes, my young frien', I mean what I say. Ye were maybe right and maybe wrang about the fracas wi' the young lords; but ye were decidedly wrang in leaving that winsome lassie to hersel' and the companionship o' sic a camstrarie auld cross-stick as took the place o' the young fellows with whom you had the rippit. Your sweetheart has been spierin' about ye atween times, I'm thinkin'," and again the guard's left eyelid showed nervous excitement.

"Has she asked for me ?" said Robert, as red in the face as one caught in the act of stealing red-hot coals.

"That she has."

"From you ?"

"Ay, from me; ye had better rin furrit, I'm thinkin'.

Tickets, please!" and the little man ran to the next compartment.

Placing the confidence that is a kind of a wish-that-it-be-so in the statement of the kindly disposed conductor, Robert immediately hastened towards the carriage where Miss Glencairn sat. It was easy enough to find her, for she was looking towards him as he approached.

There was something in her face, notwithstanding the smile with which she again greeted Robert, which told him that there was something amiss. They again shook hands, having seemingly no other way of coming to an explanation.

"Did you want to see me about anything, Miss Glencairn?" and, as he put the simple question, the young man again had the look of one caught in the act.

"I would like to meet you at the station when the train arrives," was her reply, delivered in what was all but a confidential whisper, in which there was seemingly no nervousness equal to his.

"I would like to consult with you, Mr. Mowbray," and Robert had just time to reach the step of his carriage before the train had attained to a speed too high for him to leap on.

When he threw himself into the corner of his compartment, there was for him another five minutes of strange kaleidoscope thinking to be done before the train arrived at the terminus.

"What could it all mean?" said he to himself, as a hundred and one conjectures, many of them ridiculous enough no doubt, began to run a race with the rapidly

recurring *caesurae* of that railroad rhythm which a train makes in its flight over the rails, though in point of speed, the odds were very much in favour of Robert Mowbray's thoughts. They came to him in a helter-skelter that defied all competition.

"I think ye had better gang furrit," he could still hear his friend the guard saying. And "furrit" he had gone.

"I think ye were decidedly wrang in leaving that winsome lassie to hersel'," he again hears the guard saying, and the twinkle of the honest man's eye came to him now as a sacrilege reproduced by his own mind's eye. What right had the old wretch to look at him in that way? Had he seen anything in Miss Glencairn's manner, when she sent her message by him, that would lead such as he to think that there was anything but acquaintanceship between them. A railroad guard to think of Miss Glencairn in that way! Was there any wonder that he should be agitated when he approached the carriage window from which she was looking out for him? Why, it was enough to make a man mad with himself and with the whole world of railroad guards. How could he help being agitated?

"I would like to consult with you, Mr. Mowbray," he seems to hear her saying with that sweetness of manner which was all her own; yes, all her own, and who was there to deny it? What a bouquet of smiles there was in that sweet face of hers. He had known Miss Glencairn for years, and to him she had always been the perfection of comeliness. Well, what of that? Was there anything to forbid a young man from saying

to himself all that he thought of one whom the whole parish of Kartdale admired. He had yet to learn of there being any wrong-doing in admiring a young woman whom all the world could not help but admire, even to fifty-five year old railway guards with sacrilegious twinkles in their eye.

So deeply engrossed was Robert Mowbray with his own thoughts, that he hardly noticed the slackening speed of the train as it rattled towards the great arcade of Glasgow's railway station. The dim irreligious light of the environment was what brought the dreamer back to the world of real things. As the train came to a halt, and while the passengers were rushing in a tumult from the carriages along the platform, as if time were a great deal more precious than eternity, and making their way down the great outer stairway, our hero arose, and, shaking himself mentally, much as a Newfoundland dog shakes himself physically when he comes from beyond his depth, he determined to keep excitement of any kind at arm's length, and approach Miss Glencairn with the nonchalance of a business man.

"I hope you will not think I have been taking a liberty with you," was the young lady's simple greeting as Robert glanced for a moment into the depths of a pair of greyish blue eyes, in which there seemed to be no secure footing for anything but honesty of purpose.

"No liberty, whatever," answered Mowbray, almost losing his head again.

"My purpose is easily explained," she said.

Robert made the remark that perhaps they had

better hasten to the stairway before the upper gate had been closed, and thus be in a position to find their way to the street when necessary.

"You know, Miss Glencairn, a railway-gate keeper is very much like a revival preacher; he is no respecter of persons."

Robert was doing his best to banish all excitement of manner.

"And what about the business man, Mr. Mowbray? I am afraid I am sinning against him as much as against the gatekeeper. But I will explain myself as we find our way downstairs."

"Ever since we left Kartdale station," Miss Glencairn proceeded to say, when they had reached the waiting-room below, "Lord Clay has been talking partly to me but mostly to himself about the failure of some Glasgow bank he has money in. I didn't like to put any questions to him, for he seemed to be in a temper all the way; but I thought I might ask you if you had heard of any financial trouble of this kind. What bank could he mean, Mr. Mowbray?"

Remembering what his lordship had let fall in his hearing on the Kartdale platform, Robert informed her that he knew nothing about the matter beyond what Lord Clay had said.

"Do you think he could be referring to the Commercial Bank?" continued Miss Glencairn, and there was something in the query that brought a ray of solicitude over Robert's face. What depths full of possibilities have these two young people been looking into as they turned away from that gaze of a first confidence into each other's eyes? How far down into

these depths had they seen? Was there anything that could possibly be misunderstood in the often returned glance of Grace Glencairn?

"May I ask if you have any interest in the Commercial Bank?" asked Robert, still trying to keep excitement at arm's length.

He now remembered that Lord Clay in his feverish conversation with him had mentioned Macpherson McLean as one of the directors of the bank of whose ruin he seemed to stand in dread, and nearly everybody knew that Macpherson McLean was a prominent director of the Commercial Bank. There had, therefore, been a method in the old nobleman's madness after all. The Commercial Bank was no doubt the institution he had been referring to in his seeming irrelevancy.

"I would not like to tell everybody how deeply I am interested in that bank," answered Miss Glencairn, "but it would be all but ruin to us, were anything to go wrong with it."

"Ruin to you and ruin to many more," murmured Robert, as if interpreting the phrase 'to us' in the general. "Ruin to Macpherson McLean anyway."

"And who is Macpherson McLean?"

"He is my employer, Miss Glencairn."

"Ah, would he really be so deeply involved?"

"Yes, and my uncle Fairservice would not escape either, though he would hardly be ruined."

"Then what would you advise me to do, Mr. Mowbray?"

Yes, Mr. Robert Mowbray, what had the young lady better do? That is the question, and a pressing

question it is. Perhaps if you again look down into the depths of unreserve and trustfulness which are to be found in these remarkable eyes of hers, you may find the necessary divination in them. Would it be an impulse—the impulse of self-interest, or the impulse of the charity that seeketh not her own—to advise her to deliver herself at once from the possibility of ruin? But who knows of a certainty whether there is a possibility of ruin hanging over her? Lord Clay's telegram no doubt meant something to him, but who was to say that it meant anything to anybody else? The nobleman's statements and rambling comments were hardly to be relied upon. They were perhaps only the utterances of an irascible old man excited by a mere supposititious fear.

"The only advice I can give you, Miss Glencairn, in the meantime, is to do whatever you would like to do. A woman's impulse is often safer to follow than a man's matured judgment."

The sympathy in the manner of Mr. Robert Mowbray's words would have perhaps been more than Miss Fannie Lockhead would have cared to witness had she been present to give an illustration of a woman's impulse. Had she been present at this interview, that young lady, shrewd and sensible as she was said to be, would probably have been inclined to grade man's judgment even a little lower than Mr. Mowbray did.

"A woman's impulse is not always so highly recommended by those who have sometimes to suffer from its effects," answered Miss Glencairn, with a liquid light melting under her drooping eyelashes. "Besides, this is hardly the time for impulse on the part of

man or woman, and that is why I have detained you to ask your advice."

"General ruin and a run upon the bank are ali but synonymous," said Robert, as if to himself.

"You mean that others will be involved."

Robert Mowbray bent his head in assent.

"Then it is no time for giving way to impulse."

"The impulse to do the right should always be given way to."

"But what is the right in such an emergency, Mr. Mowbray? Whatever is to be done I must do at once, and there is no one but you to whom I can refer for advice. What am I to do?"

There could be no escape surely from the spell of such pleading, and, when at last the young lady put her hand upon her companion's arm, with the beseeching of a child in her manner, and said "You must really tell me what I am to do, Mr. Mowbray," Mr. Robert Mowbray could waver no longer.

"You must save yourself from ruin, Miss Glencairn."

"Must I take my money from the bank?"

"Immediately."

"And your uncle?"

"I will telegraph to him."

"And your employers?"

"Macpherson McLean?"

"Yes."

"He knows the condition of the bank's affairs better than you or I know them."

"But perhaps there is no truth in the rumours."

"Perhaps not."

"How can we be sure, before taking a step in the matter? Can you find out from Mr. McLean?"

Robert Mowbray's smile was dangerously near being a laugh at the expense of his fair interrogator.

"That would be a little dangerous," was all he said, however.

"Why?" was the query of Miss Glencairn's eyebrows.

"Such enquiries would be equal to suspicions, and the directors of a bank would rather deal with open denunciation than with inuendo."

"But no harm can come to you should you make enquiries."

"We must do our duty whatever happens," said Robert.

"And so you will help me?"

Help her! what a question! But Robert Mowbray did not suffer the words to pass from his lips, for the old agitation had again come upon him, as he saw the mist of gratitude in the liquid light that was all but a prayer.

"I must hasten into the city to find out what is to be found out about this thing," said he.

"Then I will see you again?" she asked, as they proceeded from the waiting-room to the street, now walking side by side.

"You have no confidential lawyer in Glasgow with whom we could consult?" asked Robert.

"I have never found it necessary to consult anyone but old Mr. Hathorne, the lawyer in Kartdale."

She then informed him that she had only come to Glasgow for a morning's shopping. To go back to

Kartdale to see her lawyer would be to waste time. Perhaps he could get some one to help her—some broker who would get her money from the bank. There was the stock to be transferred or disposed of as well as the deposits, and she was not sure she knew how to go about it.

Robert assured her that he would do what he could to avoid the necessity of her going back to Kartdale. Then he spoke to her of other matters as they passed along Clyde Street, where the crowds were not so great.

"I have been in some trouble myself this morning," said he, gaining full command of himself as they moved along in the bright morning sun. "And in regard to the transfer of these shares, I am afraid you will have to employ somebody who is not under a vow as I am, to speak the truth and nothing but the truth."

Then he laughingly told her of the circumstances of the minister's sermon, with something of the particulars of the adventure in the train.

"To transfer or sell your stock, now that you suspect the bank to be in difficulties——"

"But we do not know of a certainty that the bank is in difficulties," said the young lady.

"No, but you will, before you have time to sell your stock. I do not suppose you will sell out if Lord Clay's telegram proves to be of no account."

The tone of Mr. Robert Mowbray's words modified to some extent the harshness of his argument, though Miss Glencairn could not but wonder where his philosophy was likely to lead him and her.

"The horse-trader who palms off a faulty horse on

a novice in horse-flesh, is seldom esteemed an honest man. To act a falsehood is perhaps even worse than to tell one."

"Oh, Mr. Mowbray, then you think I will have to lose my money!" and there was an alarm in her tone that made Robert almost ashamed of himself.

"I am only speaking from the standpoint of a man who is under a vow."

"Then you will not be able to help me?"

"It would be no falsehood to make the dishonest horse-trader take back his faulty steed, to throw the responsibility of the deed of restitution upon the party who had tried to make a profit by deception. But we must not linger longer over the philosophy of your difficulties, Miss Glencairn. As you have said, whatever is to be done must be done quickly. I shall do my best to be relieved from my duties in the warehouse after twelve o'clock. Perhaps by that time I shall be able to reassure you, or at least have learned something definite of the bank's difficulties. I shall be glad to meet you after you have done your shopping—though that will hardly be to you this morning the pleasant operation which it generally is to ladies. Where will I be able to find you at half-past twelve?"

Miss Glencairn was unable for the moment to say.

"Then suppose we meet in the Arcade."

"At half-past twelve?"

"Yes, that hour will be the most suitable for me," and hastily raising his hat to bid her good-morning, Robert Mowbray hastened across the street and was lost in the current of human beings that swelled in the more central thoroughfares of the great city.

CHAPTER VI.

"What a queer kind o' dergue is this love, auld wife,
Tho' ye've had o't yoursel' to your fill;
A shuttle-ploy sure, 'mang rich and 'mang poor,
With its pirnsfu' o' woof guid and ill, auld wife,
With its warp that maks guid o' the ill."

"Lost in the current" is hardly the most appropriate expression to use in describing Mr. Robert Mowbray's feelings of himself as he left Miss Glencairn, if by any chance or mischance, emphasis be placed upon the word lost.

Lost! why, to judge of him as he elbowed his way, like a strong and heedless swimmer against the ebb and flow of the streets, one would be more inclined to use the word found. The new heaven and the new earth had come into his life; at least he had had a glimpse of the fringe of its sweetness and light, which a big cloud on the horizon, the biggest of storm-clouds, perhaps, only seemed to enhance for the moment. The impulse to do the right was upon him, as we know from the report we have had of his interview with Miss Glencairn; and from within the mist that hung over the borderland of the new region just revealed to him, the glistening rosebud of a woman's tearful face could not fail to bring to that impulse an

additional impetus. But a stronger impulse, that has no waiting-time on the right or the wrong, to distinguish the one from the other, had come upon him—the impulse that had made of the strongest of mankind the silliest of dupes, even in the days when men claimed it to be none other than the spirit of God descending upon a man to give him strength and courage to overcome his enemies.

When a young man meets that friend of his, who may be thought of as becoming in time something more than a friend, the impulse to do the right has fearful odds against it, unless it be identified with the impulse that would fight that friend's battles. For good or for ill, her foes are his foes, her difficulties are his difficulties, and woe betide the dragon in the way, whether that dragon happens to be antipathy or sympathy. The bystander may use the balance that only blames, and shake its indicator in his face. His friends may pity and remonstrate. Some woman or other may look from out the mist of the bygone with a woe-stricken look, and the memory of her may waft a mournful restraining chord among the newly attuned heart strings; but the impulse that has the sunshine of the new heaven and the new earth for its stimulant, knows no bridle but its own organic exhaustion. The joy of the unattainable, in the career of a man or woman's love, cannot but make of its goal a mere will-o'-the-wisp. But what lover is there to believe it? Not Robert Mowbray, sensible lad though he be, as Jeames would say. Not Grace Glencairn, as she thinks of her appointment in the Arcade, a business one

though she calls it. Not Fannie Lockhead—but we must not anticipate.

A lover never meets trouble half-way. He is too light-hearted for that. He can laugh at the most serious of obstacles, even as Mr. Robert Mowbray laughed and jeered at his painful experiences of the morning. What were these to him now? Had there ever really been in them anything worth talking about? As for troubles to come, there was no time to think of such. The railway guard had incidentally warned him against the constable of Kartdale, who might possibly be lying in wait for him in the evening. Well, let the constable of Kartdale do his best or his worst! He, Robert Mowbray was prepared to meet a whole phalanx of constables, and keepers, and henchmen, and myrmidons, whenever Lord Clay's sons thought fit to collect them against him. Constables be fiddled!

"Young Mr. Mowbray is not a man to be cowed," Jeames had once been heard to say in the session-house, when Robert had been having his character read; and possibly the reader's wayward surmises may be none the worse of having Jeames's opinion placed on record alongside of them, in order that these same surmises may be straightened out a bit.

"I've kenn'd him ever since he was a wean, and as a boy comin' but and ben among us, wi' the Kirk as the but, and the session-house as the ben, as it were, I never ance found him disrespectful to his elders or unwillin' to learn what was guid for him to ken. Of course I can think o' him daein' wrang, for, like the rest o' us, he cannae but be a stane's throw or twa frae the saintship that is sure o' its angelhood; but wrang-daein'

on his pairt is mair than likely to be right-daein' in the lang-run. He has a way o' reachin' out to the best that's to be had, by a series o' stepping-stanes that are no aye in a raw. We may differ wi' him about the steps he selects, but he'll get there a' the same; and the there that he gets to will be a settin' to his name. Tak' care o' your steps we may say to him, gin we like, but he's taking care o' them whether or no, and he'll dae harm neither to his ain shanks nor to the shoogliest o' the stepping-stanes, ye may tak' my word for it. Exactly sae !”

“ But a man who runs away from a first principle is surely worthy of being watched,” says the reader.

And there is no doubt that Robert Mowbray was kind of running away from the first principle laid down by the minister of Kartdale, in his famous sermon about the speaking of the truth, though that may not be the first principle the reader is thinking of. As he strode onward into the heart of the city, revelling in the light and heat of his latest discovery, whatever that was to be in its fullest sense, he gave little heed, I am afraid, to the falsities that, like Cervantian wind-mills, beset him on every side. Even if he had noticed it, the time was not opportune for him to defame the flash announcement of the retailer who claims in the most bare-faced type that he can sell with impunity his goods for less than they cost him. The cry for compassion from the pseudo-beggar who wallows in his profitable filth and rags and incurable sores during daylight, that he may clothe himself in the purple and fine linen of the modern *habitué* of the concert-hall and theatre in the evening, had no interest for him either from the

negative or positive standpoint of reform. The advertising cry of the perambulating huckster might or might not be a lie; the sandwiched man might, or might not, be a fore-and-aft embodiment of all that is false; the morning auctioneer, with his brazen early voice, might be appraising his own soul as a bargain to the venerable father of lies, for aught Mr. Robert Mowbray knew or cared. These wind-mills, or whatever you like to call them, these wind-bags or helkites of the indirect methods of business life might, or might not, be giants easy to overcome. If they were giants, some adventurer other than he could have his will of them from the Stone Pulpit in the Goosedubs, or of a Sunday afternoon amid the polemics of Nelson's monument. As for him, he had other business in hand, his first object being to reach the warehouse of Macpherson McLean & Co., and after that—well, after that, events would probably take their own course.

But if a young man running away from a first principle ought to be watched, as the reader declares, and unhappily escapes being watched, the next best thing that can happen is for him to fall in with someone who can advertently or inadvertently show him the way. The course of true love never runs smooth. So says the most thread-bare of our proverbs. But is it not strange that the inequalities which line the pathway of fickle love, of the love that is not true, have not been immortalized in a proverb? Perhaps the old lady who coined the proverb about true love, had had her own experiences of the other kind of thing and naturally enough thought that everybody knew of the inequalities of its course, as well as she did. If so, she need not

have laid herself open to the charge of keeping back a part,—a charge once laid so pitilessly at the door of poor Sapphira, but might have safely enough developed her partial saw into a universal dictum. The boulevards of love, even like Glasgow thoroughfares at midnight, are ever in a state of uncertainty; and a lover, any lover in fact, fickle or true, false or fair, seems to have a kind of a claim upon Providence, just as an elder of the Kirk and the street-walker can equally well demand civic supervision and protection. As Mr. Robert Mowbray had no pressing need for civic protection that morning as he passed along the city streets, Providence thought it well, perhaps, to help the young man in his somewhat out-of-the-way course, by providing him with an interruption of a friendly kind, in which there came to him the guidance that comes at times like a revelation, or rather like a dictate of conscience.

“Hallo, Mowbray!” was the rather commonplace greeting of Providence, as the confidential clerk of Messrs. Macpherson McLean & Co. passed, with speed in his pace, near the Royal Exchange.

It is needless to say that Providence,—which, as has already been stated, has a kind of chaperonage over the steps of the soul-engrossed,—revealed itself on this occasion, in the personality of a Glasgow merchant, on his way down town. The gods among men were not ashamed to say “hallo” to anyone, even before the days of the telephone.

“Hallo, Mr. Mowbray!” again shouted Providence on the rush from the pavement to the causeway and back to the pavement. Had the shoulder of the soul-

absorbed Mowbray been within reach, the personation of Providence would possibly have emphasised the shout in Robert's ear by a still more bucolic method of greeting.

"Ah, how do you do, Mr. Turner?" exclaimed the young man with a start.

Mr. Turner's full signature was, as everybody knew, P. C. Turner, Esq., head of the firm of Turner Brothers of West Nile Street; but nobody had ever said that the first initial of his name stood for Providence, simply because few people ever knew what it did stand for.

"You seem to be in something of a hurry, this morning?" said he.

"Yes, I have been detained on my way from the station," answered Robert, making no pause in his pace, however.

The two were soon some distance past the Royal Exchange, a little out of the thick of the crowd that is always wending its way towards Wellington's monument, and here Mr. Providence Turner drew out his handkerchief to wipe his well-beaded forehead, as he continued to carry on the usual talk about the weather.

"If you are in for a race, this morning, Mowbray, I'm thinking you'll win it," said the merchant at length, all but out of breath. "Even 'better late than never' might give you a minute to spare in behalf of a friend."

But the stride of the two, as their heels kept time on the asphalt, knew no diminution. Robert was not to be detained. He had work to do.

"I am ever so glad to have met you this morning," and when the greeting had reached thus far, the key of the confidential seemed to come into the merchant's

voice. "You are on your way direct to the warehouse, I suppose?"

Robert said he was going straight to the warehouse, and the sooner he got there the better; after saying which, his pace became even faster.

"But, dear me, I want to speak to you. Did you not hear me saying that I was glad to see you this morning? I have something by ordinar' to speak about. It looks as if I would hardly have time to blurt it out, you're in such a hurry. Take your time, man, and tell me if you have heard anything about the bank this morning," and Mr. Turner looked on this side and on that side of the way as he took his friend's arm.

"What bank?" exclaimed Robert, with unhidden surprise, drawing up as if the military command of "halt" was in his ear.

"Turner will know," was what he had said to himself when he was first accosted by that gentleman, and the very query that Turner had put to him, had been on the tip of his tongue to put to Turner. But his haste had driven it away.

"You don't mean to say, Mowbray, that you have heard nothing about the Commercial Bank?" and there was a whisper in the man's words as he again looked this way and that way in the street. "There may be nothing in it, you know," though in every line of Mr. P. C. Turner's face there was written the conviction that there was something in it.

Whether Mr. Turner's first name was Providence or not, Robert knew that he was rich enough to be a providence to a hundred such as he. He was one of

the neighbours, commercially speaking, of Macpherson McLean & Co., and had known their confidential clerk ever since he had become a confidential clerk, and knew of the likelihood of his becoming a junior partner in the large concern, long before the villagers of Kartdale had formulated their surmises. He had always had a high opinion of the young man, and if Robert was seemingly a little brusque with him as the kindly disposed agent of Providence, it was the brusqueness arising from being in a hurry, which every business man has to respect, and which Mr. Turner, for the moment, seemed to be only too ready to overlook. Had anyone afterwards asked him, however, a straight question about the young man, he would no doubt have answered, best of friends as they always had been, that there was evidently something amiss with him.

The intimacy between the two men was such that the confidential clerk knew fairly well how far Mr. Turner was financially interested in the Commercial Bank. He was, of course, not so deeply involved in its affairs as Macpherson McLean; but he was perhaps sufficiently so, to be excited over any misfortune that might befall it.

"There may be nothing at all in it, you know," Turner again said in his half-whisper. "Nothing in it at all. You remember the fuss and fume about the North British six months ago, and I suppose the same kind of talk will go on about some other concern six months hence. The shavers are always excellent scandalmongers, no matter what the money market may be doing."

The commercial world, like a village, has a very

long pair of ears. The faintest breath of disparagement cannot escape them. Bradstreets is their outer labyrinth; 'Change their inner; with self-interest vibrating as the most sensitive of tympanums. Naturally enough, with such a sensitive medium vibrating with every breath, the chances are nearly always in favour of the ordinary fama not being true, and, with the incipient cunning of the gambler, the frequenter of 'Change seldom puts faith in the preliminary rumours set afloat of a morning, in the money-market-place.

But if the frequenter of 'Change is an eager listener, ever on the *qui vive* with ear and eye, to watch how the wind-straws of trade are being blown, he is also vindictive to a degree. Tit-for-tat is an observance which even regular attendance at church has not been able so far to suspend in this world; and in the commercial world, I am afraid, it is as much of a sweet morsel as it was in the days of the Jewish dispensation. Vengeance is mine, says the man who has lost money, and he continues to think so as long as he is without the hope of recovering it; even more than this, his desire for vengeance is as bitterly breathed against the heedless bungler as against the most cunning of rogues.

And no one knew this better than Robert Mowbray and Providence Turner, as the caution of the one and the seeming reticence of the other bore witness.

"Yes, my dear Mowbray, there really may be nothing in it after all."

"I shall be sorry for you, if there is anything in it," said Robert, relieved to escape the direct query so far.

Robert Mowbray may have laughed a short time before at his experiences of the morning and the con-

stable of Kartdale *in posse*; but though he was not a man to be "cowed," as Jeames had said, he had none the less made up his mind to be cautious. The vow to speak the truth had at least done this much for him.

"Mr. Macpherson McLean, I suppose, could tell us whether there is anything in the rumours. Has he said nothing about them in your hearing?" The question though insinuating, breathed nothing of the underhand, as far as Robert discerned.

"Not a word!" answered the confidential clerk of Macpherson McLean & Co., though perhaps it was indiscreet in him to be so emphatic.

A humourist has said that, unlike George Washington, he could tell a lie, but he would not. Mr. Robert Mowbray was evidently not far from being able to say that he neither would nor could tell a lie. Notwithstanding the suspicion of the reader that his late vision, ever present as it was with him still, would in time detract from the prestige of the minister's sermon, there was less danger of this than might at first be expected. Robert Mowbray carried the corrective of his own conduct about with him. He might wish to tell a lie, but that honest face and that sensitive manner of his would hardly suffer him to do so without instant detection, now that his conscience had been quickened by the sermon of the minister of Kartdale.

"You have had no suspicions, then, that something might be wrong with the Commercial Bank?"

"None, whatever," replied Robert, with the emphasis all gone out of his voice though.

Be careful! Mr. Mowbray! Are you going to send Mr. Providence Turner, the providence of your own

affairs for all that you know,—are you going to send your friend Mr. Turner away with what is equivalent to a falsehood in his ear? “None whatever!” you have said, but that is a little too strong, is it not?

“Then I am the first to give you a hint about the matter?” exclaimed Mr. Turner.

You had better be careful, again, Mr. Mowbray! The spell of your vow has surely not gone out of your life all of a sudden. You don’t want to speak of Miss Glencairn’s affairs to strangers. You don’t want to let fall a word that would betray your employer’s interests, directly or indirectly. But the contemptible of spirit can have no foothold in that realm of which you have just had a glimpse. The whole truth has to be spoken. The old minister of Kartdale was either right or wrong. You have maintained in face of Willie Turnbull’s cynicism that the old man was right, and who is there more contemptible than the man who would betray himself?

With the vow of speaking the truth thus emphasized by every fibre of his being, even more intensely than ever, the young man had at last to turn to Providence and tell him all about Lord Clay and his telegram.

“A-ha! then there must be something in it, after all,” exclaimed Mr. Turner, but whether he was pleased or displeased, glad or afraid, nobody could well have been able to make out from his manner.

Robert, perhaps by way of excuse for his reticence, remarked that it was a dangerous thing to start or strengthen rumours that might involve thousands in ruin, with the possibility of there being nothing in them.

"You're quite right, Mowbray, quite right, sir; and I am sure your chief, Macpherson McLean, would be the first to say so to you. But there must be something in the rumours, all the same," continued Turner. "A telegram is surely something."

"Perhaps Lord Clay was making more of his telegram than there was any need for," said Robert, quietly.

"You didn't see the telegram?"

"Well, no, I didn't see the telegram."

Robert had to smile at the keenness with which the frequenter of 'Change had pounced upon him as a possible clue.

"There have been indefinite surmises about the true condition of the Commercial Bank for some time, in the inner circle, of course, you know, Mowbray. But this telegram is a different thing. A telegram is like the city set on a hill; it cannot be hid. You have no idea, I suppose, who could have sent Lord Clay that telegram?"

No, Robert had not the faintest idea. Lord Clay was rather a fussy old man, rather irascible besides, and his statements were not always to be relied upon.

"But you are sure he had received a telegram?"

Yes, Robert felt sure of that.

"Did he mention it only to you?"

"No, several others may have heard him speak about it," said Mowbray.

"Ah, then it must be on the way of being made public. Was there anyone that might possibly be interested in the welfare of the bank, near at the time when the old man was holding forth?"

"There were his sons."

"Ah, of course, you have told me all about them."

This was only partly true, for Robert had said nothing so far to anybody, beyond the railway guard, about the fight he had had with the Clays.

"Was there anybody else in the railway carriage besides Lord Clay and his sons?"

"Lord Clay's sons were not with him in the railway carriage," said Robert.

"Neither they were. That's true enough. What was I thinking about? You have just told me how they had quick march put upon them. It must have been fun to the bystanders, to hear the heirs of Clay Castle reminded of the starving condition of their poor old mother, sitting at home without food or fire. Well, well, he must be a witty old fellow, even if he be irascible, as you say he is. But about that telegram. Was there anybody in the carriage with Lord Clay, after his sons were forced to retire? Was there anyone with whom he might possibly have conversed confidentially about that telegram, and the possible condition of the bank?"

"It's no use, Mr. Mowbray," hummed that young man's vow, "it's no use for you to hesitate, you are only making matters worse by hesitating." And so Robert proceeded to tell Turner of Miss Glencairn and the possible ruin that would befall her should anything happen to the Commercial Bank. What harm could there be in telling everything, as long as Turner could have no suspicion of the new heaven and the new earth that had excited the confidential so much?

"I am glad you have told me all this," said Mr. Turner. "It opens up the way wonderfully."

Could the wretch really suspect after all.

"The fact is, Mowbray, we must verify that telegram."

"Substantiate it, you mean, I suppose," said Robert, hardly knowing what he was saying.

"No, that seems to be pretty well done, by what your fair friend, Miss Glencairn, has told you."

Robert could have twisted Turner's neck for him. What business had he to speak of Miss Glencairn—yes, Miss Glencairn—in that way.

"No, my dear man, we must go further than that, we must find out what was in the telegram, at least what was the true cause of its being sent. It may have been a mere blind. The fussy old nobleman may have been merely a tool in the hands of some long-headed chap."

"More possible deceptions," thought Robert. "Why, the world is full of them."

"Yes, my dear Mowbray, we must verify that telegram."

"But who is to verify it for us?"

"You must verify it for us."

"Me?"

"Yes, you, and no other."

"But how can I find out what was in the telegram?"

"You can corroborate our suspicions, or you can find out whether they are all gammon or not. You can do us both a good turn by applying for information at headquarters."

Robert Mowbray saw that his providence was on the track he himself had been on for some time, about appealing to those who were sure to know about the

real condition of the affairs of the Commercial Bank. The difficulty was, how to make that track serviceable to the end of an enquiry.

"I see you are interested in this Miss Glencairn," continued Turner.

Robert, again, could have knocked the man down, and, as it was, could not altogether keep back the fire of indignation from getting into his face.

"Well, to say the least, you are interested in her banking affairs."

Robert savagely bit his lip. This was making bad worse. This was making what might have been the mere incidental so emphatic, that nobody could miss taking notice of it, and Mr. Turner saw how he had better run away from that phase of the question.

"Then you have other friends that have stock in the Commercial Bank, besides Miss Glencairn," and in saying so, Providence thought he might again with safety look into Robert's face.

"Macpherson McLean is a director of the bank," said Robert, glad to get on safe ground.

"I know that; we will come to him in a minute."

"Then there is my uncle?"

"Has he much of the Commercial's stock?"

"I think he must have five thousand, anyway."

"And Miss Glencairn?"

"I may be able to tell you about her stock better in the afternoon, perhaps," muttered Robert, with the lately recurring redness round his ears still apparent.

"You are to meet her again, to-day?"

"Yes," answered Robert, seeing there was no escape from telling everything to a man who evidently had

studied the art of questioning with an object in view.

"Well, now, look here, Mr. Robert Mowbray, I may as well tell you, first as last, that we can be of some service to one another, and that very soon. You will do something for me and I will do something for you. You will verify that telegram, as we say, and I will see that whatever stock you or any of your friends may have will find a safe sale at this morning's market price."

"Even if the bank should begin to topple over?" exclaimed Robert with an ecstasy he could not conceal.

"Yes, I may safely say, even if the bank should fail."

The sunshine of the newly-discovered world again flooded itself over Mr. Robert Mowbray,—a sunshine, it is needless to say, that had nothing of the lustre of pounds, shillings and pence about it, at least nothing of the lustre of the pounds, shillings and pence of his uncle's bank stock, realized though it might be at par from the ruins of a rotten bank.

"The means of rescuing Miss Glencairn, are at hand," said he to himself, "and it is for me to see that she is rescued."

"And what am I to do in return for this?" he asked, turning to his friend.

"You will have to see Mr. Macpherson McLean."

"And then?"

"He is a director of the bank, of course."

Robert had said the same thing a minute ago.

"Then there is this silence of his to you. That is ominous. That in itself justifies us in being anxious about Lord Clay's telegram."

"Well, there might be something in that."

"You are his confidential clerk, you know."

A pause.

"And you may be excused if you should happen to take a liberty with him."

Another pause.

"In other words, my dear fellow, our only safety lies in your taking the bull by the horns, in your asking Macpherson McLean to give you a plain, unvarnished story about the bank's affairs. Nothing else will do our turn."

"But suppose he refuses to give this plain, unvarnished tale."

"Then threaten him."

"Threaten Macpherson McLean!"

"Yes, tell him that I am going to call upon him about the same matter, and that before the day is out. That will be as good as a threat."

CHAPTER VII.

'Tis a' in the trade and its strife, auld wife,
Though righteous it never can be ;
If you ask me for why, maybe ye would try
To lay down the *par* o' a lie, guid wife,
The aboon nor below o' a lie.

The firm of Macpherson McLean & Co. was looked upon as one of the most reputable, as it certainly was one of the most extensive, in Glasgow. In point of age, it was not a very old firm; yet with the self-complacency that prosperity brings to men and firms, it had taken its place, as by a kind of divine right, among the older houses in the city. The self-made man has a knack of setting the value on himself that no one thinks of doubting. And if Macpherson McLean was a little inclined to sing his own praises as a self-made man, it was natural enough that his business should take after him. It was a self-making business, if not a self-seeking business too.

Like the "hafflin' chiel" who clings to his knickerbockers because he knows what a good leg is, and has possibly overheard some maid or maidens give whisper to some eulogy on his well-trussed body, the firm of Macpherson McLean & Co. had never given up that branch of their business which had brought to them

their earliest popularity. They had earned the right to hold their heads high as a wholesale house, but they were not prepared to rush away altogether from their past. The desire for recognition by the many had become a second nature to them, and so they still clung to the retail counter. Macpherson McLean was a proud man with a humble smile, and the business he had made naturally took after him. It was proud of name and fond of being popular too.

"Dear me, what a place that Macpherson McLean's is; what a busy beehive!" the multitude were never weary of saying, as they passed slowly hither and thither through the winding lanes of wares exposed for sale, adorned, as they ever were, with the showiest of advertising cards. In these variegated corridors the vocabulary of enticement was an art that had to be well understood. Here the literature of the label had a realm all to itself. Here the perplexities of the profit and loss account were all hidden away behind the insinuation, floating in the very air, that it was profit to buy and all but a sacrifice to sell. Mr. Macpherson McLean was a public-spirited man, perhaps even philanthropic; and the business he had made naturally took after him. There was a semblance of philanthropy in its every walk and conversation.

"All is fair in love and war and the retail trade," is the amended form of the most hideous aphorism of the old dispensation. Better be an ass at once than not be able to sell goods to the most finical of customers is what it really means. The practical pays, and, whether it be of Hades or not, must be brought to bear upon every process of trading. The horse-dealer has

given us the piano-man, and the piano-man has brought with him the sewing-machine agent. The insurance agent, the book agent, and the fruit-tree man are all of the same game, while the inventor of any new advertising trap comes upon the swarm of them like a revelation. As the effect of competition, the said inventor is hailed as if he were a common benefactor, though our grandfathers never knew him. Every knight of the counter feels all but bound in honour to give him hearty welcome. The linen draper hails him as an auxiliary, the boot and shoe man has his picture taken by him, the printer claims him as the feeder of his family, and the patent medicine man fairly bows down and worships him. And who is to blame for the coming of the new commercial cult, or what is there to blame about it?

"If it doesnae beat a'," I have heard Jeames saying in the presence of Robin Drum and others, "how thae big towns o' ours are growin'. Gie me Kartdale and I'm content; ance and a while folk may gang to the city jist to see what like vanity fair is, and tak' note o' its lusts. A veesit is a lesson o' life for me. The hurly-burly is somethin' maist amazin,' and gin ane gets out o' it wi' safety to his limbs and morals, he is sure to be mair trustfu' o' the truth that is within him than ever afore. And nae wonder, for the lies that abound in the streets and the squares and around the railway stations are fit to scunner even the easiest gangin' o' godly wayfarers. Gang this side o' the big brig, and a big lie o' an advertisement stares ye in the face telling ye that ye'll get sugar for naethin' on the yonder side; and tak' ye to the yonder side, and ye

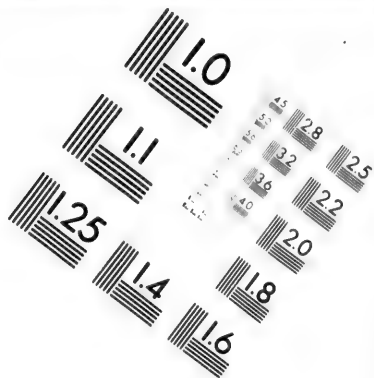
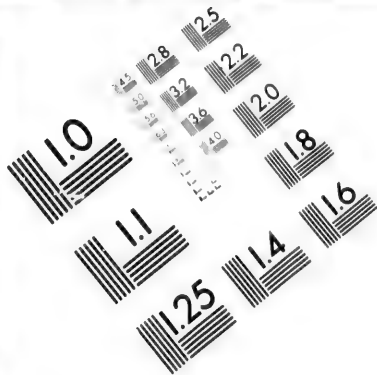
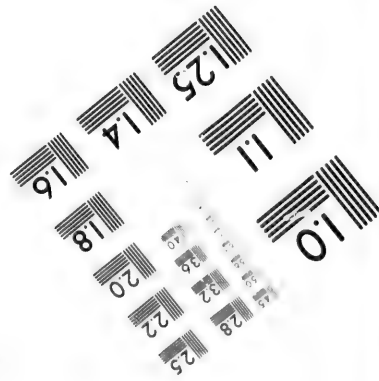
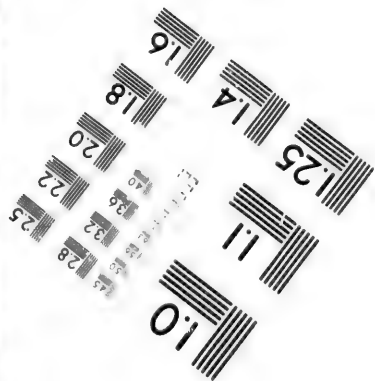
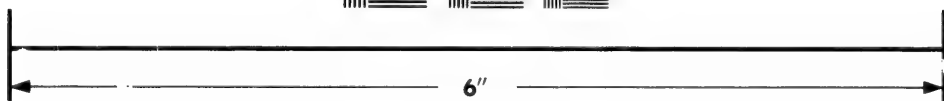
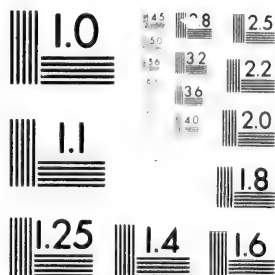


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic
Sciences
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

25
28
32
22
20

01

would think ye were in pandemonium, though ye dinnae get the sugar for a' that ; for the grocer'll no gie ye the sugar unless ye buy some o' his tea. The tricks o' trade that are practised right and left, convince ye that the best place for your hands are in your pouches, and ye had better keep them there."

"An' yet they hae grand kirks in thae big towns, as we a' ken," Robin would venture to say.

"And godly preachers tae; but they hae maistly a' gi'en ower thrashin' the Ill Ane o' a Sunday, I'm tell't, and that's bad. But wha kens whether or no that's the real reason o' the carnival o' wickedness that abounds a' aroun' frae the Gorbals to the Gushet House and back again crosswise. The smell o' smoke and the sulphur mist that every now and again hangs ower the place, evidently mak's the deil's denizens that live in it sae callous, that they carenae a whistle. The faither o' lees and his bustling abode are near them ilka week day, and maybe they are a' the better o' a rest frae learnin' about him on the Sabbath, when he an' the rest o' his clan are supposed to be in bed."

The partners of Macpherson McLean & Co. were no worse than their neighbours. That at least could be said of them. The indirect methods of the retail trade were none of their making, and if they had their share in the perpetuating of them, the respectability of their way of buying and selling had never been called in question by the public, who kept going in and out of the great warehouse making the most of the bargains they thought they were sure to find there. To see Mr. Macpherson McLean in his pew of a Sunday, with the stately Mrs. McLean by his side, you would have been

forced to say that, as far as his position in life was concerned, he also was well satisfied with his bargains.

From early morning till early evening, the stream of purchasers kept coming and going; and had Robert Mowbray been an ordinary salesman in any of the retail departments, he would probably have found some difficulty in obtaining leave of absence. He had parted from Mr. Providence Turner with an understanding that included two emphasized items; first, that he was to keep his appointment with Miss Glencairn, and second, that he was to be at the warehouse of Turner Brothers early in the afternoon. Of course in promising to keep these appointments Robert did not expect there would be much difficulty in arranging for leave of absence. He was no underling now. He had had his day among the ordinary idiosyncracies of the retail counter. From the department where the wearing apparel of men and women was said to be sold at less than cost, to the department where the "upper ten" selected their furbelows, he had had experience of all the fascinations of the retail trade, before he had climbed to the regions of the wholesale department. Now he had no special department, but was often to be found in the retail building, sometimes in the wholesale, oftener in the counting-house—Mr. Macpherson McLean's right-hand man, as might truthfully be said, if the other partners could be excluded, for the moment, from the classification. The regular customers had come to know him, and he had come to know them; and as he passed from one department to another to correct this or supplement that, he had to make a very busy day of

it. It is needless to say that the popularity of Mr. Robert Mowbray was a proverb everywhere in the establishment.

On entering the warehouse, after parting from Mr. Turner, he was immediately in the rush of it. He was late, and the quieter rush of the morning had begun. But go where he would, his problem followed him. He could not keep the events of the morning out of his thoughts, and he could not keep his thoughts out of his face. The song of duty kept humming in his ear, though whether it was the duty he owed to Macpherson McLean & Co., or not, is another question. Indeed, the strangeness of his manner was stealthily commented upon before an hour had passed. As he himself had afterwards to confess, if the financial prestige of Macpherson McLean & Co. had depended upon his successes that memorable morning, its disintegration had been imminent. Never had such ill-luck struck him before in his efforts to make a sale or settlement of difficulties.

"And what was more," he would continue to say, "my ill-luck did not escape the notice of one of the junior partners. An old customer from Kilmarnock with whom I thought I was something of a favourite, at least to whom I generally managed to sell a large and safe order, suddenly left me that morning without making a single purchase, saying he would return in the afternoon. Of course I was kind of grateful to him; considering what I had on hand; but what was my chagrin when I learned that Mr. Constance had sold him three hundred pounds' worth of goods an hour after."

And just as little did his conduct escape the notice of the employees of the establishment. The shadow which coming events are said to throw before them is very often never seen until after the events have taken place. But the shadow on Robert Mowbray's face was seen before the event, and before the morning was out had become the wonderment of many.

"I think you will be none the worse of it," said Mr. Constance, with that half-and-half laugh of his, "I'm afraid you are out of trim this morning, Mr. Mowbray."

Robert had just told the junior partner that he would perhaps require to leave for an hour or so during the day, and the above was the reply he had received for his pains, though he need not have said a word to him about the matter.

"When will you have to leave?"

"Dear me;" exclaimed the confidential clerk, taking out his watch and looking at it, "I have no time to lose. I must see Mr. McLean at once."

"That is hardly necessary," said the junior partner, "I will tell him."

"But I must see him about some particular business I am anxious about," said Robert, showing more and more excitement in his manner, a great deal more than he need have shown.

"Ah, that is a different thing," returned Mr. Constance, as he left him for another of the departments.

Gladly accepting his congé from the junior partner, Robert went off in search of the senior—the chief himself. The search was not instantly successful, and the manner of the young man became more excited

than ever, when, hurrying through the salesrooms of the "upper ten," he came upon Mr. McLean, who, as not unfrequently happened, was conducting an old lady, a family friend of his own, towards one of the chairs in the silks' room.

"Ah, here is Mr. Mowbray, the very man we want," exclaimed the head of the house, when he saw his confidential clerk approaching. "He is the very man you want, anyway, Mrs. Jamieson," he continued with the smiles of a man who had served behind his own counter with success. "Though a little out of date now as a salesman, I would be delighted to wait upon you myself, but I have an appointment at the bank at noon and I must be off. Mr. Mowbray, will you be so good as show Mrs. Jamieson what silks we have? You will excuse me, I hope," and he raised his hat as if he was leaving a distinguished personage.

"The inevitable," murmured Robert, as he thought, to himself—something about the music of fate and how he would have to face it, and all unconscious that he had said anything audible, though the murmur, unfortunately, did not escape Mr. Macpherson McLean. He saw at once that there was a look of something or other in his favourite clerk's face which he had never seen before.

"Now or never, I must speak to him, though she may have to wait," and Robert again muttered the words, hardly knowing what he was doing, though this time Mr. Macpherson McLean could make out the last part of his sentence.

"Wait ! who's to wait ?" asked the head of the firm,

indignantly, but low enough not to be heard by Mrs. Jamieson.

The word "wait" thus uttered, came as a quickener to the young dreamer's wits. It gave him the chance he was looking for, and whether he meant to save himself or not, he was able to use the word in his own behalf.

"I would like to wait upon you in the counting-house, Mr. McLean."

"Oh, you want to see me about something "

"Yes, I would like to be away for a little while to-day."

"Oh, is that all? Well then, why not see to Mrs. Jamieson and go. Your time is your own after that, is it not? Excuse me, Mrs. Jamieson, Mr. Mowbray will be with you in a moment," and he took a step further away from the counter, when he saw the phase of alarm in his clerk's eyes.

"I want to speak to you immediately, Mr. McLean."

"In the counting-house? Privately?"

"Yes, privately."

"Anything really serious?"

"Well, perhaps."

"Perhaps? Then what is it?"

Robert hesitated. It is not so easy to find the right word to use when one is called upon to explain himself.

"Is it about yourself?"

"No,—well, perhaps it is," Robert said.

"Are you sick?"

No, he was well enough in health.

"Then what is it, pray? What do you want to

“speak to me about ?” and impatience and doubt played round the words of Mr. Macpherson McLean.

“I would like to speak to you about the bank,” said Robert, at last.

“The bank ! What bank ?”

“The Commercial Bank.”

There was no mistaking the effect which the whispered conversation, passing thus suddenly between the clerk and the principal, had upon the latter. The pale brow of the proud man grew paler, while the look of prosperity that was usual in his eyes, went out of them.

“You have heard something, then. Mowbray ?”

Yes, Robert said he had heard something.

“Then come to the counting-house, as soon as Mrs. Jamieson dismisses you,” and again lifting his hat to that lady, he hurriedly went downstairs.

As soon as Mr. Macpherson McLean withdrew, Robert turned his attention to his customer, who was good-natured enough not to notice the delay in serving her. Mrs. Jamieson was the very picture of good-nature, and when her pink and white complexion and benevolent eyes peeped out from the enshrinement of a very becoming wreath of the whitest of hair, it was impossible not to be struck with her good-nature. But Mr. Robert Mowbray was thinking of other faces than Mrs. Jamieson’s that morning, and what was more, there was a wistful look in one of these faces as it turned from the shop windows in the Buchanan Street Arcade, to look this way and that way towards its entrances, as if in expectation of some one coming. At least, Robert Mowbray thought so in his day-dreaming. To keep a promise is to speak

the truth by premeditation, and as he had taken a vow to speak the whole truth, no matter whether it was present, past or future in its tense, to him his vow and his promise to meet Miss Glencairn became identical. Miss Fannie Lockhead and other complications had to be considered, it is true. The course of true—that is, certain circumstances could not but prevent him from thinking of Miss Glencairn as anything but a friend, but the cherishing thoughts he had of her, the desire to fight her battles, would certainly strengthen him all the more to keep his vow.

It would be strange, would it not, gentle reader, if Robert Mowbray's vow to abide by the truth in all things should become in him more and more of a passion, as the hours and days went by? Be that as it may, there were evidently strange ideas passing through his mind on this or kindred subjects, if that rueful countenance of his did not belie him, as he turned to Mrs. Jamieson.

After the usual conversational skirmishes about the weather, Mrs. Jamieson said she had called to see if she could get some more of the irregularly corded silk which she had been shown the week before, when she was in.

"You remember, I bought enough to make a dress of it for my eldest niece."

Yes, the confidential clerk remembered helping Mrs. Jamieson to select some dress-silk, but he was afraid there was none of it left.

"Do you want it to match?" he asked.

"No, not particularly to match; but the quality has pleased my sister so much that I want some more of the same quality for two more dresses for her girls."

"I'm afraid it is all gone. There is at least not enough of it left to make two dresses; I am sure of that. But if you excuse me, Mrs. Jamieson, for a minute, I will look over the stock carefully," and Robert passed behind the shelves.

"There is none of it left," said he, coming back in a little while. "Would no other kind be satisfactory?"

It would not have been considered amiss if the confidential clerk of Macpherson McLean & Co., had been a little more conciliatory in his manner. Mrs. Jamieson would probably have looked even more good-natured than she did, had he been so, though how it would have been possible for her to look more good-natured as she watched him through her gold-rimmed glasses with these sympathetic eyes of hers, bright and coquettish to a degree yet, the contemplative salesman had perhaps neither time nor inclination to consider.

"You may let me see what you have," said the old lady, and her soft lowland accent seemed to carry with it an unconsciously expressed hint that she was willing enough to be deceived as long as she did not know it.

Robert at once called an assistant shopman to help him in bringing down some of the silks. After a cursory inspection of a number of the parcels, and a closer examination of two of them, Mrs. Jamieson finally put her hand on one of the two and asked:—

"This is as good as what I bought last week, is it not, Mr. Mowbray?"

A man who would or could not take advantage of such a question was surely worse than "the ass that could not sell." But, as we know, Robert Mowbray's

vow had become, or was on the way of becoming, a passion in him; and, call him what names you like, it would not turn him from his determination to speak the truth, whenever he had to speak.

"No, Mrs. Jamieson, the surface is good enough; but the quality, the substance through and through, is not the same."

The assistant salesman could not help staring; he could sell better than that himself.

"Then you have none of the same quality as the silk I had from you before?" asked Mrs. Jamieson.

Well, no, Robert did not think there was anything so good in stock as what she had bought before. There might be more of it imported soon. When? Well, he was not prepared to say. Would Mrs. Jamieson not wait for a day or two and he would make inquiries? Would she not allow him to put her order down? He would see that there was no delay.

"I am anxious to have these dresses this morning," replied the matron with increasing firmness in her tones. "My sister is as anxious as I am to have them. Is this not as good as the best?"

"It is the best we have in stock at the present moment," said Robert, quietly.

"It is not as good as the other, though?"

"No, I would not like to say that it is."

"Is it not good enough?"

"It is good enough for the money."

"But you would not advise me to buy it?"

"Not if you want the best, and can wait for the other."

"But I cannot wait."

Mrs. Jamieson was getting emphatic.

"Then you had better take this."

"But I want the material to be as good as I had from you last week; I want the best."

Robert shrugged his shoulders; and the assistant salesman shrugged his also; though these clavical obtrusions probably did not mean the same thing.

"I am sorry things are this way; but I suppose it cannot be helped," and as she said so, Mrs. Jamieson rose and hinted that she would be glad if the assistant salesman would direct her to the mantle-room. "I think I heard Mr. McLean saying that he wanted to see you in the counting-house, and I am afraid I have detained you too long, Mr. Mowbray," and so the old lady dismissed Robert and went her way with the wondering assistant.

"There must be something wrong with the young man this morning," she said shortly afterwards, and the assistant overhearing her, was not slow to think that the old lady was not very far wrong in her surmises.

"I think I can do better than that," he said to himself; and so he did, for half-an-hour afterwards he took Mrs. Jamieson back to the silks' department and sold her the dress material she had been looking for. He had found the silk she so much desired to buy, in a corner of one of the shelves, which Mr. Mowbray had overlooked; at least, so he said, with something that was all but a smirk in his face, when, laughing over his own cleverness to some of his fellow salesmen on their way home in the evening, he openly declared it to be his candid opinion that if young Mowbray

was not crazy, he was on the fair road towards being so.

"Mrs. Jamieson, I am told, did not get what she wanted," said Mr. Constance, as he was crossing Robert's pathway for the second time that morning. He had met the assistant and Mrs. Jamieson on their way to the mantle-room.

"No, we are out of the silk she was looking for," said Robert with a tremour in his manner which could not be hidden.

"Had we nothing like what she wanted?" and there was an emphasis in the word "like," which spoke volumes.

"There might have been," replied Robert, for he saw what Mr. Constance had insinuated, "had I cared to deceive her," and with this Roland for the junior partner's Oliver, he hurried past him towards the counting-house.

"I wonder what can have happened to the fellow," said Mr. Constance as his eyes followed the confidential clerk in his seeming flight—"I never saw him this way before."

But Mr. Constance did not consider how excited-looking he himself might have been had he been personally interested in a pair of beautiful wistful eyes in the Arcade, looking this way and that way towards its entrances, with the clock approaching so rapidly the hour of half-past twelve. Besides, how was Robert Mowbray to know how long his appointment in the counting-house would further detain him?

CHAPTER VIII.

There is pride, ye would say, in the maist o' guidmen,
That aye yont its pech flaps its wings :
'Tis hale to be humble ; 'tis grit no to grumble,
At the weird mistress fate aften brings, guid wife,
At the c'ronach the jouking jade sings.

When Mr. Mowbray entered the counting-house, he could readily perceive from Mr. Macpherson McLean's attitude towards him, that the ordeal through which he was about to pass, was one that would require more than the ordinary tact and presence of mind to sustain with credit to himself. As the self-conscious head of the firm turned from his desk on his turnstyle chair to receive his confidential clerk, there rested on his spacious brow a cloud that could hardly be taken otherwise than as a storm-precursor.

Few men were feared more by his subordinates than Mr. Macpherson McLean. As has been said, he was a proud man with a humble smile, but it must not be supposed that his smile had anything to do with his pride, either as its cause or effect, or counteractive. He had taken to the practice of smiling in the earliest days of his apprenticeship, whereas his pride was the pride of the self-made man,—the pride which comes only after success has been achieved. The one was

the habit of the salesman, the other of the capitalist; and if the former had in its lines at times a tendency towards weirdness, the latter in its outbursts more than counterbalanced the insincerity, when the year's account of his weaknesses was made up. He was a man with whom anyone could get along, on pain of submission, however, to his opinions and wishes.

"You had better take a chair, and tell me what you have to tell me in as few words as possible, for, as you know, I must rush to the bank as soon as you have done," and Macpherson McLean looked at the face of his watch, and seemed to be saying that it would be all the worse for it, if it was not up to time.

Young Mowbray at once obeyed the request of his chief, and began to tell the story he had already told to Mr. Providence Turner, though he made no mention of that gentleman's name during the earlier stages of his narrative. He confined himself to what Lord Clay had said to himself on the platform, as well as what the nobleman had said to Miss Glencairn in the railway carriage.

"There does not seem to be very much in your tale of woe and coming disaster, after all, my dear Mowbray," said Mr. Macpherson McLean, with the cloud rising and the smile taking its place. "The preliminary facts of your story are the mere details of a suspicion. I suppose your thoughts were of the danger our firm might incur should anything happen to the bank."

"And of others as well," Robert would have said, had Mr. McLean given him time for the interruption.

"You know, my dear boy," he continued, "it is not

easy for an institution that has such a wide clientele as the Commercial Bank, to escape making losses now and again; and possibly some of the more recent of these losses, having got wind, may have been magnified by rival institutions. Lord Clay, I know, has a large amount of Commercial stock, but his account is not in our hands, though he may have a trifling amount on deposit with us. The telegram he has been making such a fuss over has evidently been sent to him by some one who has a confidential interest in his affairs, but no proper interest in ours. Your suspicions, I am afraid, have been too easily started."

Hereupon, though Mr. McLean paused, Robert Mowbray remained silent. But to prevent his silence from being misunderstood, for he must not now give credit to a falsehood even in the indirect, he said he had no definite grounds for suspicions against the bank until Lord Clay's telegram and other circumstances had excited in him an anxiety to consider its standing in all seriousness.

"You mean that you have not been taken into my confidence sufficiently to express a safe opinion about the affairs of the bank with which the interests of our firm are so intimately mixed up. I suppose you know that bank directors have secrets which they are not expected to divulge even to their confidential clerks. There are many things discussed in the directors' room of the Commercial Bank which I do not mention even to my partners."

Mowbray said he was well aware of that.

"Then what is it you would like me to tell you?"

There was again silence for a moment between the two men.

"Somebody has been asking you for your opinion about the stability of the bank, I suppose?"

Robert said that his opinion had been asked.

And the cloud again took the place of the smile on Mr. Macpherson McLean's face.

"And you were chagrined in not being able to say?"

No, that was hardly his position.

"I cannot but be deeply interested in the welfare of the firm that has done so much for me," said Robert.

The cloud lifted a bit.

"And which is, perhaps, prepared to do even more for you yet," returned the head of the firm, in whose expanding philanthropic tones there was the semblance of a spirit that was inclined to temporize.

The confidential clerk modestly bowed his acknowledgments.

The portend of a storm was perhaps not going to be fulfilled after all. How could it, in fact, in presence of the return of Mr. Macpherson McLean's smile? Still, storms do sometimes come after a calm, as well as *vice versa*.

"But there are other affairs you are solicitous about this morning, are there not? There is that Miss Glencairn whom you met on the train, and whom you must have met before. She, as you no doubt know, has stock in the Commercial Bank and a large deposit besides."

"And my uncle, too, has a deposit," said Robert, running away from the subject of Miss Glencairn, as he had a perfect right to do.

"Have you anything in the bank of your own?"

No, Robert had no money of his own invested in that way.

"How much has your uncle on deposit, do you know?" and the query was evidently a leading question, leading possibly to Robert Mowbray's own personal affairs.

"I think he may have the matter of five thousand or so."

"And that brings him in, in return, almost nothing."

Mr. Macpherson McLean put his hand on his chin and ruminated for a moment.

"Can we find no better investment for your uncle's money than that, I wonder?"

Mr. Fairservice's nephew said that he had never given the matter a thought; he never interfered in his uncle's money matters.

"You know he is not a very old man yet; and can look after his own affairs as well as ever."

"But surely he would only be too willing to give his nephew a lift in life, if he could do so and make more of his capital, besides?"

That was a question for him to decide, was Robert's reply.

"I suppose you have a little capital of your own, besides what your uncle might be induced to put out to use in your behalf? Your father had his own troubles, I know, but I hope he saved a little out of the ruin of things."

Robert shook his head. If his father had left anything of an estate behind him, this was the first he had ever heard about it.

"Dear me, you don't mean to say that nothing was saved from the wreck," and there was now a sympathy in Mr. McLean's voice that might have been meant to be prophetic. There was no make-believe about the cloud this time. "Do you know, Mowbray, your father was one of the most promising young men in the city, when I came to Glasgow; yes, one of the most promising, and was at the head of the tree while I was still floundering among the lower branches. And so all went with his misfortunes? Dear me, isn't it awful to think of!" And the chief partner of Macpherson McLean & Co., actually gave a little shiver that caused his turnstyle chair to creak.

Then he began to ruminate again, and there was a creeping silence in the room until he said:—

"We have lately been thinking of making a change in our business, Mr. Mowbray, and it was because you were an interested party that we have not so far broached the subject outside of my partners. I feel that I must begin to withdraw from the activities of the warehouse work. I want rest, and we must find some one to join the firm—to associate with us more actively than I can. The person we take in must of course have some capital, and the whole question of giving you a junior partnership has been reduced to the question of finding out how much capital you were likely to have at your command. You have had ambitions that way, I am sure, Mr. Mowbray?"

Yes, Mr. Robert Mowbray's ambitions had extended in that direction. There was no doubt of that; and it would have been the height of folly for him to attempt to deny it or half deny it, with the throb of joy leaping

in his life-blood like a magic oxygen-quickener. What myriads of thoughts did that same oxygen-quickener bring welling up in his mind—the sudden memory-phantasmagoria of the drowning man—with the retrospect of his life playing a ghastly game with its prospects. How his experiences of the morning came before him more prominently than ever ! Would this proposition of Mr. Macpherson McLean's interfere with the new principle that had entered into his life ? Would the acceptance of that gentleman's offer, even if it could be accepted, involve the sacrifice of any moral principle ? There were difficulties in his life—difficulties to come, as they were, perhaps,—that would test this new principle in his life to its utmost tension. There was the finesse of business life, which was more or less an exaggeration, while there was the advertising spirit of the retail trade, a great deal more than less the most bare-faced of lying. What ! Would he have to bid good-bye to these practices ? He had been making his debut as a moralist in thought, word and deed, with the old merchant of Kilmarnock, as well as with Mrs. Jamieson, and what was to be said of his success ? Was he getting off the track or on to it ? Was he becoming a crank or a convert ? Was he becoming pig-headed, a purist, a so-called God-fearing man ? Ah, what a title to earn for one's self ! A God-fearing man,—a thoroughly honest man within and without ! Was Mr. Macpherson McLean a God-fearing man ? Was Mr. Constance one ? Would it be possible for a truly God-fearing man to be a successful business man ? Would this partnership be a hindrance to the development of his new idea of

rectitude of conduct? Was telling the truth the foundation of all rectitude of conduct? Could a lie be allowed to lurk in any corner of the new heaven and the new earth he had lately been peeping into? What was he going to do about Willie Turnbull? What was he going to do about his poor uncle and auntie—or about the Clays—or about Mr. Providence Turner—or about Miss Glencairn—ay, or about Miss Fannie—well, that difficulty will have to be solved as a trouble that is not to be met half-way. There will be some way out of it—and if not, there will be only one way into it—for a man must keep his word.

The speed of light is nothing to the speed of thought; nor does the refraction of the one produce anything more remarkable than the irrelevancy of the other. There are regular degrees of obliquity no doubt in both—a swerving from the seemingly natural co-relationship that cannot very well be accounted for—the connecting or disconnecting links being hid away out of sight of the ordinary or common-place. The reader has already discovered this in Robert Mowbray's thoughts, as the retrospect of his life plays a ghostly game with his prospects. Where his irrelevancy would have carried him, had Mr. Macpherson McLean not been in such a hurry to join his brother bank directors, it is impossible to tell. So anxious was that gentleman to get away, that he even showed some impatience with the moment's silence during which his confidential clerk had had the dream that came to him when the offer of a junior partnership in the house of Macpherson McLean & Co. all but carried him off his feet. No man dreams

when he is asleep. The dream comes to him during the seconds of time it takes him to awake. And Robert Mowbray had actually rushed through his dream of irrelevancies, before Mr. Macpherson McLean had prolonged the conversation another stage by asking:—

“Do you think your uncle can be induced to help us out with this suggestion of mine?”

This second reference to his uncle was no doubt the dream point from which Robert's irrelevancies started, bringing him instantly to see his fate in the question. “What am I going to do anyway about my poor uncle, in the face of that temper-disturbance of his of the morning?”

“My auntie will make that all right,” he thought, but as a first thought it immediately had to give way to the reply he made to his patron, that he could say nothing for certain what action his uncle would take under such circumstances.

“You and he are on good terms, I suppose?”

“Yes,” said Robert, with the word drawn out doubtfully. “That is, we generally agree on most matters; at least I have always let him have pretty much his own way when any discussion has arisen between us,” answered the young man, whose truth-telling in every particular had evidently, all joking aside, become in him a veritable passion.

“A very good policy, a very good policy, indeed, for young people who want to get on in the world!” said Mr. Macpherson McLean with a bit of a laugh. “I was something in that line in my young days, my-

self; and a very easy and satisfactory way of sowing one's wild oats, I found it. Don't you find it so?"

One would have thought that the successful merchant was confessing what a wicked fellow he had been in his young days, as many old rogues delight to do at times.

Robert, by way of reply, said that it was as easy for a man to make himself popular as it was to make himself unpopular.

"And every man should do his best to make himself popular, if he would be successful."

"But no man should do his worst to be popular."

"You mean he should not do evil that good may come?"

Yes, that was Robert's full meaning.

"And your uncle?"

"Will have to be an after consideration, I am afraid. He and I had some difference this morning for the first time."

"A serious difference?"

"No, only about some question of local politics; but he became very angry and said some very offensive things, which he may not readily forget."

Mr. Macpherson McLean was again looking at his watch. A quarrel between uncle and nephew ought not to keep him from the bank.

"You had better make it all up with him, my good fellow, when you get home this evening; and at the same time urge upon him the necessity of his finding a better investment for his capital."

And Mr. Macpherson McLean as he rose to go, smiled as if there never had been a cloud on his face.

"But what shall I say to him and others about the Commercial Bank, should they speak to me about the matter?" asked the confidential clerk very quietly and modestly.

"What will you say?" asked the merchant.

"Yes."

"About the bank?"

"Yes."

"Why, of course you will advise your uncle to invest his money with us in your behalf. He will be doubly safe then, surely——"

"And to others I will say?"

"Say what you like."

"The truth, of course?"

"Yes, of course, the truth."

"Then the bank is safe?"

The cloud came down on Macpherson McLean's forehead like an avalanche of indignation and wrath.

"What do you mean, sir, by daring to express your suspicions in that way about the Commercial Bank, and in my presence too?"

The storm was going to burst after all.

"The bank is safe! Who said that the bank was not safe? To hear you speak one would think there was going to be a run upon it before the day was out."

Robert said that, as there were rumours abroad about the bank, he had pressed the question partly in his own interest as well as in the interest of others. For the sake of his own reputation, he would like to be able to speak truthfully when he did speak.

"It is sometimes better not to speak at all," said Mr. McLean rather vehemently.

"That is true, but is silence always a straightforward course?"

"Straightforward?" and the exclamation brought the storm nearer and nearer to a climax. Then drawing a deep breath, McLean said, "let us see where your responsibility in the matter is, young man. You have neither stock nor deposit in the Commercial Bank?"

No, Robert said he had neither stock nor deposit in the Commercial Bank.

"Then where does your responsibility begin to come in?"

"A bank is a public institution."

"Granted."

"And its failure is a public calamity."

"Granted."

"And any citizen who would not do his best to ward off that calamity, would be anything but a good citizen."

"Ah, I see; you want to know something about the bank on public grounds. Had you not better wait until your partnership is achieved?"

Robert said modestly that he did not see what difference that would make.

"Partnerships do not always fall to men who have not learned to mind their own business."

Mr. Macpherson McLean had taken the button off his foil at last, being very angry indeed.

"Many young men become public benefactors too soon," he exclaimed.

But two can always play at this game of plain

speaking. Robert Mowbray began to lose his temper also.

"You think I am intermeddling?" was his direct question.

"I think you are," was the direct answer. "I think you had better let the Commercial Bank take care of itself."

"But I cannot."

"Why?"

"Because it wouldn't be right."

"Is it this Miss Glencairn's money you are after?"

The conflict was now mortal. Robert could only hold to the arms of his chair, and stare at his opponent. How could anyone, who knew as much of him as Mr. McLean did, cruelly attack him in that way? Miss Glencairn's money! He after Miss Glencairn's money! The insinuation was an insult.

Yet, for all that, he must speak the truth: to save Miss Glencairn from financial ruin was undoubtedly his primary object in this inquiry. Yes, with his employer's thrust still paining him to the quick, he must tell him that, in a certain sense, he was after Miss Glencairn's money.

"Ah, I thought so," was the sneering reward he received for his honest dealing.

"And I would be a poltroon not to find out how she can be relieved of her anxiety."

"Then you had better go elsewhere than here to find out," shouted Mr. Macpherson McLean, looking as if he were in a mood to use much more forcible language than that, perhaps use violence of another kind.

"No, sir, you will learn nothing further from me about the Commercial Bank. I have the honour to bid you good-morning. You may retire."

"But I must learn something more."

"Not from me, young man. I have had enough of you for one sitting."

"Would you allow a poor — a young lady like Miss Glencairn, an orphan — to lose her money, when you may save her by — word." Robert Mowbray's temper and urgency brought the water into his eyes, as he raised himself to his full height and looked his employer straight in the face.

"Would you advise her to take her money out of the bank?"

"She hasn't asked me for advice."

"But I do in her behalf."

"Then I have no advice to give her."

"Not to save her from ruin?"

"No, sir."

"Nor the bank from ruin?"

"The Commercial Bank can look after itself."

"Nor Mr. P. C. Turner, of Turner Brothers?"

The blow had to come, and the blow told. Mr. Providence Turner had said it would tell. The mention of his name in Macpherson McLean's hearing would amount to a threat, he had said to Robert Mowbray on the street; and his words had come true, if the palor on the proud merchant's face meant anything.

It was now Mr. Macpherson McLean's turn to lean heavily on what was nearest to him, the edge of his desk.

"Mr. P. C. Turner! Have you seen him this morning?"

Robert said he had.

"And did he say anything to you about the Commercial Bank?"

Robert said he did.

"Did he ask you to see me?"

Robert bowed in the affirmative.

"What did he seem to know?"

"Nothing very definite."

"But he told you to see me?"

"He did."

"Then you had better see him again."

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

A pause.

"Tell him the bank is sound."

"From you?"

"Yes, from me."

"Then nobody need worry over the rumours?"

"Nobody need worry about the Commercial Bank, that is to say, Mr. Turner need not worry."

"Then Miss Glencairn's—that is, my uncle's money is safe?"

"I have already said that I think in your interest, your uncle had better lift his deposit, whatever it is, and invest it with us in your behalf."

"And Miss Glencairn's?"

"That depends on the nature of the interest you have in that young lady. If she is likely to become a relation of yours, then advise her as you would your uncle. It is better to be sure than to be sorry."

"And Mr. Turner?"

"Tell him what I have told you to tell him."

"But I cannot do that."

"You cannot?"

"No, it would be a——"

But the confidential clerk did not utter the word that came to him uppermost.

"It would be a what, pray?"

"It would hardly be the truth, would it?"

"Then you won't tell him what I have asked you to tell him?"

"I cannot do that," said Mowbray again, but more emphatically.

"Not even to save our firm from embarrassment, the firm of which you are likely soon to be a partner?"

"Not even for that."

"Then I must see him myself," shouted Mr. Macpherson McLean, as he fled from the room.

CHAPTER IX.

The love that 'ill last comes frae trust, guid wife,
And trust is the strength o' guid luck :
Its patience is nescience, its instinct a prescience :
Frae the waistrie o' fate it can pluck, can pluck,
The sweetness that springs frae its muck.

Mr. Robert Mowbray found himself as much behind the time of his appointment in the Arcade, as Mr. Macpherson McLean was behind his at the Commercial Bank. The ladies fled in one direction, the former in one almost opposite, yet the temper that lingered in both of their faces as they passed through the warehouse one after the other, did not pass unnoticed. The gossip passed from counter to counter that something serious had happened in the counting-house between the head of the firm and young Mowbray.

As Robert fled—for fleeing he seemed to be from something, or to something,—he had room in his mind for but one thought.

“I must see Turner at once,” said he to himself, a hundred times. “There is trouble ahead of more than me, and I must not pause to think of my own affairs. She must be saved, and I will save her.”

“But what is she to me? What can she ever be to

me more than she is? Talk of speaking the whole truth to her! Why, that would be worse than to utter the most cruel lies. It would be a baseness that only a villain would dare be guilty of. I have given my word, and by my word shall I stand. She is Miss Glencairn to me, Miss Grace Glencairn, if you like, whose name is sweetness itself, no more than that,—an acquaintance, a mere acquaintance, nothing more,—a young woman whom I am willing to assist to the utmost of my power. A woman, and yet what a woman! A woman of women! She must be saved and I will save her.”

“I must see her before I see Turner, however. I told her I would meet her at half-past twelve, and now it is nearly one o’clock. I must explain to her the delay, as well as the necessity for my leaving her for a short time, for I must see Turner at once. That is my only safe course. He can save her,—can save us both, in fact.”

As soon as he had entered the Arcade, he saw Miss Glencairn standing in the angle that enables one to look towards both entrances. As he hastened towards her, he could not fail to see the brightness of the welcome extended to him. Did she really hold out both hands towards him as he came up and made his apologies for being behind the promised hour of their appointment?

“My patience is not so easily exhausted,” she said with that never failing winsome smile of hers, that had a transparent joy on its every ripple. “I felt confident you would be here whenever you could come.”

Robert at once explained to her how he had been detained.

"Then your employer is angry with you?"

Robert said he was afraid he was anything but pleased with him. |

"And it is all on my account," she said unaffectedly, looking into Mr. Mowbray's face, as if she would read her condemnation there, without fear of its being very severe in its tone.

"There is no one really to blame, as far as I can make out," he answered, "but there will be somebody to blame if we delay in doing what we ought to do?"

"Then you really think from what Mr. McLean has told you, that the bank is in a bad way?" she said.

"In my opinion there is no hope but by instantly realizing. You must apply to the bank for your money immediately."

"But must I go to the bank all alone?" she asked with a tremor in her voice.

"I have to see Mr. Turner immediately," said he, "and therefore will not be able to join you in the bank building, for half-an-hour," and Robert proceeded to tell her who Mr. Providence Turner was, and what he was prepared to do for them. "He may prove a providence to you and me before all is said and done," he laughingly remarked, as he entered fully into his trustworthy explanations.

"But what am I to do, Mr. Mowbray?" was the expression that came to Miss Glencairn's lips as it had once before, though there was even more pleading in its tones than before. "What can I do at the bank without some one's assistance?"

The same helpless cry, Mr. Robert Mowbray,—a kind of breach-of-promise cry, in your ears now, is it not? But a cry that makes you exclaim all the same in the silence of your heart—"She must be saved, and I will see that she is."

He then proceeded to give her the necessary advice, though perhaps in his manner there was more warmth than there is usually in the advice of a pure and simple business adviser. She was to draw out a check for the full amount of her deposit, and present it to the teller.

Should she ask him for payment in gold?

Yes, she should ask him for payment in gold.

But how was she to carry away so much gold?

She must buy a strong leathern satchel, and keep it by her until he arrived.

But what was she to do if the teller refused to pay her in gold?

Then she must ask him to pay her in bank-bills.

"In Commercial Bank bills?"

"Yes, in Commercial Bank bills, or in any other."

But suppose he should refuse to pay her at all?

"Why, then you must wait in the bank building until I come back from seeing Mr. Turner," said Mr. Mowbray, and with this final word the young man left, all but beside himself with the second peep he had had into the new heaven and the new earth, all but convinced that the new heaven and the new earth were his own,—oh, what a thing to say!—if he were only at liberty to ask for them. Yes, if he only were at liberty to ask,—which, alas, he was not! Oh, the conceit of these young men. Have they a conscience?

When Miss Grace Glencairn, with a nonchalance

that would possibly have surprised Mr. Robert Mowbray, who could not keep out of his ears, as he rushed along Ingram Street, the trustful cry, "What am I to do, Mr. Mowbray—what am I to do?"—when Miss Glencairn drew out a cheque for the full amount of her deposit, and presented it to one of the busy tellers of the Commercial Bank, there was a dignity about her presence which said to everybody near, "I am not afraid of anything now."

"I would prefer gold," said she to the teller, as that gentleman was proceeding to count out the amount in parcels of one hundred pound notes, though not before wondering what Miss Glencairn, for he knew her, could be wanting with her whole deposit drawn out in one sum.

The poor man's eyes seemed to start out of his head when the request for gold was made, and many of the people who stood near and overheard the demand were almost as speechless.

"Have you considered the inconvenience of carrying away so much gold?" asked the teller, as soon as he had found his breath.

"Oh, never mind the inconvenience it will be to me in carrying it away," exclaimed Miss Glencairn, "if it is no inconvenience to you to pay me in gold."

"It is a large amount," said the teller.

"I know that," said the maiden.

"Will Commercial Bank bills not suit you as well as gold?"

"As I said at first, I would prefer gold," said Miss Glencairn.

"Then gold you will have," answered the teller, with

a flush on his face that Mr. Robert Mowbray would have flouted, perhaps, had he been present to see it. "Gold you will have," and he passed out of his kind of trellised cupboard, only to return in a minute or two with several clinking canvas bags, and proceed to count out the amount of the cheque in coins of par value.

"What shall I do with my stock?" Miss Glencairn again asked, when the teller had all but completed his task of counting out the full amount of her deposit in sovereigns.

"Your stock!" he exclaimed. "Do you wish to realize on it also?"

"I certainly do," answered Miss Glencairn.

"Have you lost all confidence in the bank?" and as he asked the question, the poor agitated teller cast his eyes all around in the crowded space before his window or wicket.

"I am not here to make explanations," she said, "I have need of my capital and I wish to realize on it," was her business-like language, by way of reply.

"If you want to sell your stock, you must place it on the market in the usual way," said the teller, though it was no business of his to say so.

"But I would like to realize on it at once," answered Miss Glencairn.

"Then you had better see the manager of the bank; you will find his office over there," and the teller, though not without much trepidation, pointed out to Miss Glencairn the direction in which the manager's sanctum was to be found, as he pushed towards her the portmanteau in which he had carefully placed her gold.

"Allow me," said a voice behind her, as she put out her hand to receive the heavy portmanteau.

"Ah, Mr. Mowbray!" exclaimed the teller.

"What, Mr. Mowbray already!" cried Miss Glencairn, turning round. "Ah, Mr. Mowbray, we will have to consult the manager about the transfer of the stock," she said to him instantly with a continued business air in her manner. "This gentleman can do nothing for me in the matter of the stock. He has been very kind to me in giving me gold for my deposit, but he says we must go to the manager to see about realizing immediately on my stock."

The despair had all gone out of Grace Glencairn's eyes. With Robert Mowbray near, she seemed to have the confidence of an Amazon.

"Will you face the presence of the great man without me," said she, laughingly, "or shall I accompany you to ward off the evil effects of his surprise at a poor woman asking for her own from him."

"I think you had better continue what you have so far successfully accomplished without assistance from anyone," said Robert, taking up the heavy hand-satchel filled with sovereigns. "I am not very sanguine of the manager's power to do us any service. If he scouts our decision to realize at once, then I may be of some service."

"You have seen Mr. Turner?" she asked.

"I have," said he, and there was in his reply an emphasis which said there was nothing to fear.

"You have sent the telegram to your uncle," she again asked, for Robert had casually told her that his uncle had a deposit in the Commercial Bank, and that

it was his intention to notify him by telegram of the necessity of withdrawing the amount of his deposit from that institution. It was even his intention to send a telegram to Willie Turnbull to draw Miss Glencairn's deposit from the Kartdale branch of the bank, had she failed to obtain it from the teller of the Glasgow banking-house.

Robert Mowbray told Miss Glencairn that everything had been seen to.

At such an hour, when the directors were in session in the directors' room, it was not easy for anyone to have access to the manager of the Commercial Bank. Still his deputy was accessible, and when Miss Glencairn explained to that subordinate her intention of realizing on her stock immediately, there was almost as much consternation in the under-manager's eyes as there had been in the teller's.

"Have you lost faith in the bank, madam?" said the deputy bank-manager, with something like indignation in his voice.

"I wish to realize on my property," said she, "without giving offence to anyone."

"Have you pressing need for the money?"

"Surely nobody has the right to question what one would do with one's own."

"No, but what one does, even with one's own, has often a very injurious influence upon others," said the bank official, with a doubtful, not to say excited light in his eyes.

Miss Glencairn, however, gave no sign of moving away from her first request.

"You would like to have placed in your hands this

afternoon, something like ten thousand pounds in gold. The thing is impossible. But even if it were possible, how are you going to carry away such an amount in gold from the bank ? ”

“ That is a secondary question,” said Miss Glencairn, “ the first and foremost question is, will the bank hand over such an amount to me, a poor helpless woman, to carry away with me ? ”

“ I am afraid not,” said the deputy-manager.

“ Then what am I to do ? ”

“ Sell your stock in the usual way,” he replied, now addressing Mr. Robert Mowbray more than Miss Glencairn, however, for the former had come forward when he saw that Miss Glencairn was not likely to succeed.

“ But will that be easily done when the stability of the bank comes to be suspected ? ” asked Robert, stepping in at once as an intermediary.

“ What’s that ? ” shouted the deputy-manager. “ Stability ! Bank ! Suspected ! Have you any grounds for your seeming anxiety about the stability of the Commercial Bank, young man ? ”

“ I may say I have,” said Robert.

“ You have ? ”

“ Yes, I have.”

“ Your name is Mowbray, is it not ? ”

“ Yes, that is my name.”

“ You know Mr. Macpherson McLean ? ”

“ I ought to know him ; he is my employer.”

“ Ah ; do you know he is a director of the Commercial Bank ? ”

“ I do.”

The deputy-manager of the Commercial Bank had to pause in presence of the lack of hesitancy in the young man's manner.

"Then may I ask you, sir, what are your grounds for suspecting the stability of the Commercial Bank?"

"I am not here to answer such a question," said Mr. Mowbray. "I am here to see that this young lady, Miss Glencairn, receives her money from you."

"But you ought to know, Mr. Mowbray, that I cannot give it to her without sufficient notice."

"Are we to say so to the money market?"

"That is as it may be."

"You refuse to ask the directors to come to her relief?"

"I have no other recourse; the directors are not likely to relieve the money-market."

"Good-day, sir," said Mr. Mowbray.

"Good-day, sir," returned the deputy-manager, with his eyes starting out of his head.

"There is not much hope for us from the bank directly," said Robert, as he and Miss Glencairn came out into the main hall of the bank building. "And yet I am not very much disappointed. I really did not expect any other result about the stock. I am happy to say we will find Mr. Turner willing to do better for us. It is pleasant to know that you have your deposit here safe and sound," and Robert pointed to the heavy satchel he had in his hand. "Things might be a great deal worse. You had better take my arm, please, Miss Glencairn, in this crowd. We will make our way as quickly as possible to the warehouse of Turner Brothers, in West Nile Street."

CHAPTER X.

There's a rumour afloat that is ruin, guid wife,
Rin roun' aud retrieve what's your ain ;
Gin ye're soon, they'll refuse ; gin ye're late, you will lose,
Sae rin ye aroun' gin ye'd gain, guid wife,
Whate'er may be mine or your ain.

There seemed to be that morning more of a crowd than usual moving hither and thither in the spacious portico or frescoed hall of the Commercial Bank ; and, as young Mowbray and his companion left the room of the deputy-manager and mingled with the crowd, the former could not help making a remark to that effect. Indeed, he was sure that he had seen one or two men leaving the building with burdens in their hands, as heavy as the one he was carrying. Were there others besides Miss Glencairn, withdrawing their deposits from the Commercial Bank ? Were the rumours against the institution assuming serious form ? Would his uncle receive his telegram in time ? Would there be time to save Miss Glencairn's stock before the hue and cry was in full career ? The latter was not a very pressing question, it is true, for had not Mr. Providence Turner declared himself to be ready to take over Miss Glencairn's stock, even if the bank should fail ? How he was going to do so with

profit to himself, under the circumstances of the worst coming to the worst, that gentleman had made no effort to explain. If there was an understanding or misunderstanding, be it good or bad, honest or dishonest, between Mr. Turner and Mr. McLean, that would culminate in the relief of Miss Glencairn and possibly of others, it was nobody's business but their own. It is always considered to be an impertinence to look a gift-horse in the mouth. To sell stock to a man who had never dreamed of the bank, whose stock it was, being in danger, would certainly be acting a falsehood; but to sell stock to a man who knew everything about the affairs of the bank, was surely straightforward enough. The straightforward principle that had entered into Mr. Robert Mowbray's life was not so straightlaced as to refuse "the way out of it" which Mr. Providence Turner had been kind enough to indicate.

As the two young people were on the point of leaving the building,—Miss Glencairn with her hand on Mr. Mowbray's left arm, and he with the heavy satchel in his right hand,—an incident occurred which led them to think that to have gone to the bank later in the afternoon would perhaps have been to have gone too late. The unrest seemed to be on the increase. The slight altercation between Miss Glencairn and the teller may have been overheard and repeated, and everybody knows how swift evil tidings can take wing. It was hardly possible, however, that that was all there was in the unrest, for it was really remarkable how many persons were to be heard demanding gold in payment of their deposits.

Two Parisians once had a bet. One of them said that he could fill the Place Vendôme with a seething crowd in ten minutes. The other laughed at him, and felt sure of the stakes. But there was a seething crowd in the Place Vendôme all the same, even before the full ten minutes were up; and all that the Parisian, who had wagered on the positive side, had to do to collect the crowd, was to run into the several streets leading into that square and announce with bated breath that a crank was about to throw himself from the top of the monument. The rumour spread in the ratio of the increase in the emolument of the blacksmith who was willing to be paid according to the number of nails he had to drive in re-shoeing the horse of his patron—one cent for the first nail, two cents for the second, four cents for the third, sixteen cents for the fourth, and so on in geometrical progression. Before the ten minutes were up there was a crowd that no man had ever seen in the Place Vendôme before.

And possibly Miss Glencairn's altercation with the teller of the Commercial Bank had something to do with the crowd that kept increasing in the frescoed portico of that institution. Before she and her companion had left, there was a veritable cry for gold in the air,—men and women crowding round the wickets of the various tellers, demanding payment in gold for their deposits; and the incident that occurred as the two young people—we dare not call them by any other name yet—passed through the crowd, on their way towards the main entrance of the building, certainly did not tend to lessen the intensity of the cry.

Of those who were hastening towards the main entrance with something heavy in their hand, there was an old man who seemed hurrying from the wicket of the savings department. The something heavy in his hand he had secured in a red cotton handkerchief, and just as he approached Miss Glencairn and Robert Mowbray, his poor napkin gave way. Instantly the marble floor of the great corridor was resounding with the merry chink of two or three hundred sovereigns, as they whirled hither and thither with their eccentric gyrations before coming to rest. Instantly everybody in the crowd was engaged in hunting up the glistening coins and depositing them in their owner's hat.

As there seemed to be no one near who would appropriate any of the old man's hoard, Mr. Mowbray stepped up to him and tried to reassure him.

"How much have you been drawing out?" he asked, with Miss Glencairn still hanging on his arm.

"There was the feck o' twa hundred and fifty-five pounds," exclaimed the old man, as he looked from his questioner to the young lady with the winsome face. "Dear me, this is simply awful; do ye think I'll find it a' in my hat gin everybody's done getherin' it up. Ay, ye may smile, I'm thinkin' my leddy, but ye kennae the care that siller brings to a man."

"I think you will find your money all right," said Robert, as the last sovereign seemed to have been found. "You had better stand over at the long desk there, and see if you have it all."

"Would the leddy be guid enough to count it for

me," said the old man tremulously. "I'm sure I can trust her."

"But you wouldnae be sae sure o' me," said Robert, laughingly, and replying in the Doric.

"Oh, as for that, I think ye'll baith dae; yes," said he, looking from the one to the other, and making them both blush from the knowing look in his old withered face, "I think ye'll baith dae."

As Grace Glencairn stooped over the old man's hat counting his sovereigns, and Robert Mowbray continued to look over her shoulder at the operation, as if his protective glance was something altogether indispensable, the rush and tumble created by the search for the old man's money did not seem to subside. The tally of the old man's property came out all right. There was only one sovereign missing, and Miss Glencairn made it good to him. But were all others to come off as well as he or this young lady who had helped him to recount his money, and whose heavy portmanteau the handsome young man by her side was carrying with so much care? How were they ever to get to the nearest teller's wicket, with such a crowd pressing up to the trellised work of the row of cupboards in front? Who was to say how the increasing commotion was going to end? Was this what is called "a run upon the bank?"

The directors were in session, and there was pallor in everyone of their faces, as Mr. Macpherson McLean told them what he had heard about the rumours against the bank. These rumours in themselves were nothing—were perhaps even childish; but they were wind-straws; and the guilty consciences of men can

make out of such wind-straws "the masts of some great admiral," creaking in the throes of a disastrous tempest. Had the tempest really come down upon them? With the echoes of the increasing turmoil without, they found themselves haunted with the coming failures of the great firms that had overdrawn their accounts, of the ruinous speculations in the cotton trade when blockade-running was making the cotton trade a damnable lottery, of the advances made on the work of the great International Canal that would now never be built; and of the hundred and one hazardous schemes of theirs, with the particulars of which they were all more or less familiar. Can no one make any suggestion to delay the crisis? You may have made light of Lord Clay's telegram, Mr. Macpherson McLean, in the presence of your confidential clerk; but here it is a different matter. As Mr. Providence Turner knows, a telegram is like a city that stands on a hill, it cannot be hid.

What is that, Mr. Manager? Your deputy says that a young lady has just lifted her full deposit in gold and has been asking what steps she ought to take to realize on her shares. What noise is that outside? An old man who has accidentally let his money slip from his handkerchief! Is that all? But what made him lift his money out in gold? Were Commercial notes not good enough for him? Are other people asking for gold? The commotion does not seem to subside. Can nobody suggest anything?

No, the commotion does not seem to subside. There is truth in that, if there be the rottenness of falsehood in all else besides. And who is able to say

when the commotion will not find its way out into the streets, into the warehouses whose owners seem to have nothing else in the world to do but to draw and deposit, to deposit and draw, near these polished counters—out into the streets to the small retail houses where a pound-note is a pound-note,—out into the streets to the unsavoury lanes where a bank's promise to pay has the intrinsic value of gold. No, the commotion does not seem to subside, and who is to tell whether it will subside until the whole of Scotland lies prostrate as from the passing of a plague. The directors are impotent, as the guilty always are, when a crisis comes. Their livid faces, as they sit around the great green baize table in the directors' room, indicate their impotency. Rich and poor alike have become the victims of their imbecility. They have squandered millions, thinking, with their eyes shut, that surely the substance of all these millions could not possibly ever be dissipated. Their cupidity had made of them bunglers, embezzlers, criminals.

Oh, surely not so bad as that. Not criminals! Can nobody suggest some step to be taken to ward off this catastrophe? We are not criminals, and we will not allow anyone to think or say that we are. Can no one suggest anything? There is Lord Clay; can we not satisfy him? Then, there is this young lady who, the manager says, has been asking about her stock; can we not send for her? And it was marvellous how these "forty thieves," concentrated their wicked helplessness on the personality of a young and innocent girl who had escaped, or was likely to escape from their clutches.

"Who was she anyway?" asked many of them simultaneously. "Why not send for her at once. That old sinner, Lord Clay, is always up to some eccentricity or other, and nobody will mind very much what he says. But this Miss Glencairn ought not to have been sent away as she had been. This excitement must be put a stop to, and at once. Has she left the building? Where has she gone? Where is she to be found?" And in this way these silly old men continued to run after their will-o'-the-wisp until the manager had to withdraw to make enquiries.

In a few minutes he returned, saying that Miss Glencairn had left the building, after having paid a sovereign to a poor man who had just been lifting his money from the bank.

"What did she do that for?" asked the oldest of the greybeards, who, though millions were at stake and even his own personal property in jeopardy, could not help being struck with the seemingly ultra-generous act of giving money to a man who had just been lifting money from the bank. Senile wonderment has all the irrelevancy of juvenile ambition. The proportion of things loses its dignity in old age; the fly on the wheel sings a true song in the hearing of the old.

"She gave it to him for the one he had lost," said the manager.

"But how was he careless enough to lose his money?" continued the old director, as if the crisis in the bank's affairs was now only a secondary question.

The manager thought it as well to tell the whole story of the incident of the sovereigns breaking through the old man's red handkerchief.

"She must be a warm-hearted kind of lassie that," said the old director. "Could you not find her and bring her back with you?"

No, the manager had failed to find any trace of her. The crowd outside was increasing, and no one could tell him in what direction she had gone.

"I think, however," said he, turning to Mr. Macpherson McLean, "your confidential clerk, Mr. Mowbray, may know where Miss Glencairn is to be found," and there seemed to be something of a double meaning in the manager's words, "at least she was in his company when she left the bank."

"Did anyone really identify Mr. Mowbray as Miss Glencairn's companion?" was all that Mr. Macpherson McLean could say, as the eyes of his co-directors were turned upon him.

"My deputy knows Mr. Mowbray intimately," answered the manager.

"He could not have been mistaken?"

"No, certainly not."

"Then, gentlemen, I am sorry to say that I have been mistaken. Gentlemen, I have been nurturing a serpent in my bosom. That young man has betrayed me and my interests; has in fact betrayed the interests of the Commercial Bank. I intended to see a friend of mine before I came to the meeting. He has seen that friend while I have been here, and that friend has thrown us all overboard. The Commercial Bank is

in the extremity of danger, now that Turner Brothers have decided against us."

"But can nothing be done?"

"I am afraid not."

"But you will see."

"Yes, I will see," and with these words the directors of the Commercial Bank of Glasgow closed their meeting.

CHAPTER XI.

The passions o' life come and gang, guid wife,
Like the waves o' a cross chopping sea ;
O'erwhelming they meet, and syne they retreat,
With the swing o' the fate we would flee, guid wife,
The fate we never can flee.

Mr. Robert Mowbray and Miss Grace Glencairn, all unconscious of the turmoil they had created in the directors' room, passed through the streets that led them towards West Nile Street.

"I can leave this satchel in Mr. Turner's vault, if you do not wish to take it with you all the way to Brighton. I do not know but it would be better to make a new deposit of it in the Bank of Scotland."

"I shall be ready to follow whatever advice you are ready to give," answered the young lady, pressing his arm all but imperceptibly.

"Then let us leave it with the man who has undertaken to stand by us in the matter of your bank-stock. It will gratify him to know that we have the fullest confidence in him. And as I have to see him again about the transfer, we may as well walk in the direction of his place as not."

There is a walk in everyone's life which remains as the most memorable of all journeys. The day had

been a remarkable one to these two young people; and, as the ordinary prophetess might say, it was not yet over for them. But the walk from the building of the Commercial Bank to the business place of Turner Brothers, was perhaps to them the most memorable of the experiences of the morning. As they proceeded on their way, there seemed to be no dearth of subjects to converse about. Sometimes they would talk of the heavy load in the young man's hand—could she help him with it?—Could she not carry it just a little bit to give him a moment's rest?—Why not set it down near the shop windows now and again, as they looked into them? Then they spoke of the telegram he had sent to Kartdale. Would there be a panic there also?—Would the panic go over the whole country?—It was dreadful to think how many poor people would suffer! She was safe, thanks to him; but how many,—ah, how many,—would lose their all, before the week was out,—perhaps even before to-morrow morning?

To rescue a young lady from impending ruin is the readiest approach to her confidence; and where her confidence is, there will her heart be also. Trusting in the strength that can instantly show how far she may trust with safety, she is ready enough to make an open secret of her fears, and through the exposure of her fears, an honest revelation of her hopes.

"We have to put our faith in somebody, you know, when a crisis like this comes upon us," said the maiden, as she and her companion at last turned the corner of West Nile Street.

"And Mr. Providence Turner is at least somebody," he jokingly replied, looking down into her upturned

face. "He is not to be despised as a secret hiding-place when there is nobody else near by."

"But why do you call him by such a strange name; that is not his real name, is it?" and her laugh became the refrain of his own laugh.

"Not his real name?" he exclaimed with his face flaming with fun.

"No, I am sure it isn't."

"What, you never heard anyone who had a name like that?"

"No, never," she said.

"Nor Prudence?"

"Ah, that's different; but that is a woman's name."

"Then Providence is surely a sufficiently appropriate name for a man, if Prudence is a good name for a woman? You wouldn't forbid us poor men the use of both terms?"

"But what is his first name?" she continued, Eve-like, enjoying the fooling that our poets are ever immortalizing.

"His name is Providence."

"Oh, Mr. Mowbray; and you told me you had taken a vow never again to tell a ——"

And what a sweet little buttercup of a mouth she made, instead of uttering the awful last word. It was almost a pity there were people in the street at the time. Had that buttercup of a mouth!—But, no, Mr. Robert Mowbray is not a man after that fashion, neither is Miss Grace Glencairn a woman to think of him as a man after that fashion. Has she ever heard of Miss Fannie ——? There, that will do. If she has, she is not likely ever to think ill of Mr. Robert

Mowbray on that account. A man who has taken a vow never to tell another lie, is a man that can surely be trusted in more ways than one.

"All that I know is that his initials are P. C. T.," exclaimed Robert.

"But does P. stand for Providence?"

"I think so; don't you?"

"But that's not what I mean; is his name really Providence?"

"If it is not, I don't know what it is."

And they laughed in concert, though it was a strange place for that sort of nonsense, don't you think so? A public thoroughfare, and in broad daylight too!

Have you read Bacon's essay on love? If you have not, you have missed reading the most cold-blooded monody on that subject in the English language. The greatest and meanest of mankind was hardly passionate enough to picture the phases of love as the passion of the prophetic, though there is a literary infidelity in the air, that at times feebly hurrahs over him as the author of Shakespeare's plays—the creator of Cleopatra, Desdemona and Lady Macbeth. Love has a way of its own, the pathway of passion that heedlessly develops into fate; but Bacon knew nothing of the concrete of this development, as he knew nothing of the art that alone can beget the monody that is a passion in itself.

"Have you any real love for me?" once asked a middle-aged maiden of her elderly sweetheart, who was kind of slow in coming to terms, as she thought.

"Do you mean love in the abstract?" was the swain's cautious reply.

And when we read Bacon's essay, we find out how learnedly and leisurely a man can discourse on love in the abstract—but it is a cold-blooded business after all to be a genius and to write of love in that way. This is not a love story; but if it were, and something had to be read in it of love in the abstract, the reader would probably enjoy our friend Jeames's monody as much as Lord Bacon's, as it was once delivered in the session-house of Kartdale parish church, to Robin Drum and the rest of us.

Robin had remarked how senseless it was for two young folk to fall in love with one another, and keep it up till the financial difficulties of married life brought them to their senses.

"I was a bit o' a fule mysel' in this respect," said he, "though I haenae had, as yet, muckle faut to find wi' my fate, close-fitting as it seemed when I got marrit to the guidwife."

"Love is no to be discounted by the light o' ither things," answered Jeames. "The man that has never been in love is no a man ava'—he's mair o' a sumph than a man—a kind o' thing that has, to the end, a very sma' notion o' what life is. It's no aye a true man that fa's in love, but he is mair o' a true man ere the cunnin' hizzy is done wi' him. She's a douce lassie, weel-favoured maybe, wi' a look o' the aboon about her, and a flavour o' angel's breath in her hair, but she kens what she's aboot for a' that. How she titivates his pride till he jalooses that the best that's gaun is nane ower guid for him or her. By forcing him to think about what he would like to be, for the sake o' the doo that he's donnart on, he comes to

declare what he will be, gin his fate 'ill only let him. Then there's the modesty o' the thing—no an ill thocht in his head as long as he thinks o' her purity, and the sweet savour of her sacrifice in ha'ing onything to dae wi' the like o' him. Has he a weakness? Out o' sicht it maun gang. Has he a skellie e'e? Instantly he advises wi' some doctor to hae it put to rights. Has he roun' shouthers? He'll sleep wi' a broad on his back, until he thinks he walks stracht. Does he harbour wi' ne'er-do-weels for the fun o' the thing? He slips roun' the corner frae them after he becomes acquaint wi' her. Does he keep frae the kirk and break the Sabbath? He's there ilka Sunday dressed in his best, to be seen o' her. And sae the reform gangs on—a reform o' body, mind and soul, until he begins to think that he is walkin' stracht enough to mention the matter to her. Will she hae him? Is he guid enough for her? Is he guid enough now to look the worl' in the face? Exactly sae!"

"I suppose ye mean by the worl', the lassie's faither and mither?" said Robin Drum, making his usual far-away approach to a joke. "The man that has never had a mither-in-law has missed a guid bit o' life."

"That may be," answered the minister's man, "but when a young man gets to this stage o' his eddication, he'll no be content wi' the stolen kiss ahint the door, but will be willin' enough to be seen in public, arm in arm wi' the lassie he has selected for his guidwife, and that in broad daylight tae."

This is not a love story, however; and it is the business of neither reader nor writer to bring to the

test the conduct of Robert Mowbray and Grace Glencairn by the light of Lord Bacon's cold-blooded analysis or Jeames's homespun philosophy. However pleasant it may be to wander in the byways of love-phenomena, in the hallowed twilight of the new heaven and the new earth as discovered and individualized by others, we have here to watch the turn of other events. Love is the greatest thing on earth, but truth is from everlasting to everlasting. These young people of ours, in their developing companionship, have dared the daylight and the crowd of West Nile Street, as if it were some woodland lane, with nothing but the privileged pigeons to overhear the semblance of their own cooing. They have taken the law of love into their own hands—if it be the law of love that has brought them to look so longingly into the face of love,—and who will hinder them from singing all by themselves the monody that Lord Bacon never had learned how to sing, but which sweet Will of Avon knew so well by heart? Love is fate, and, as we all know, fate is no respecter of time or place. In a word, love can weave its passion-threads as well in the noon-day thoroughfares as in the gloaming of the remotest glen, and it is no business of ours to question her fateful prerogative.

But Lord Bacon goes far, when he says that love can overcome every other passion. If it can, can it also rise higher than the highest principle of a man's life? Love is the greatest thing on earth, but truth is from everlasting to everlasting.

Veritas prevalebit !

Will it? .

Then, that is the problem we want to watch.

Had this been a love story, which it is not, a more elaborate picture, with the minutest details keenly drawn, ought to have illuminated its pages with the beauty of Miss Glencairn. Her face was the face you see so often in the illuminated editions of the classics, lit up with the life in it of the most beautiful face you have ever seen on the stage or off it. Her hair had the developed shade of the golden tresses of childhood, with the less frequent wavings of more matured tending,—a wreath of twilight lingering above her smooth but half-hidden forehead. The transparency of her complexion came upon one like the peep of dawn with a rosy cloud in it,—with the bluer light of day still unrevealed behind the silken fringe of her eyelashes. Her dimpled blushing ears (like Rebecca's twins from behind their mother's waving robes) just dared to look beyond a fluttering ringlet or two; while that little buttercup of a mouth of hers seemed to chide them for their audacity, and yet encourage them all the more in their wiles.

Then there was her figure. To attempt to describe it, would be one of Cupid's maddest capers. Her walk was the embodiment of *incedit regina*; her posé the repose of the Vatican's Ariadne. There was a pride in her every movement, but it was the pride of a woman who had never been accused of affectation,—the pride of a natural dignity, in which the false dignity of pride had no share.

"What a fine-looking couple!" said the old apple-woman at the corner of the street. "If they're no

gaun to be marrit; something there maun be to prevent them."

And something there is to prevent them, as Robert Mowbray has often enough casually thought during the morning; but whether that something will prevent them or not, is another question.

In the beauty of innocence, as in the beauty of holiness, there is no expectancy. The lover is no prophet. Sufficient unto him is the good of the present. His happiness is there, and when the thought of marriage comes to him, he turns from it as from a surprise—as from an interruption to his instant joy, just as the truly holy man turns from the necessity of his dying as a step towards the higher ken of the holiness that knows all.

As the two young people went their way towards the warehouse of Turner Brothers, they were quite unconscious, as has been said, of the turmoil they had excited in the board-room of the Commercial Bank. Yet, as their friendly confidences, (not to speak of them in stronger terms, seeing we know all about Fannie Lockhead,) sprang up from the bank's affairs, it would have been little short of ingratitude for them to turn their backs upon the source of their present enjoyment.

"I have every confidence in Mr. Turner," said Robert, turning away from some matters of secondary consideration that had arisen as incidents of the way—little confidences of taste and opinions, the angel-gossip of the new heaven and the new earth—which need have no place here.

"As a shrewd business man he has no superior in

the city, and we all know what an influence he has over Macpherson McLean."

"What a strange name that is also," said Miss Glencairn:

"Do you think so?"

"I do."

"You see what it is to be used to a thing."

"Now, there's your name?"

"Mine!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, yours."

"What is there in my name that is strange?"

"There is nothing in your name that is strange."

"No?"

"But there is something that is very sw—that is, very appropriate."

"Oh, Mr. Mowbray; we were only talking of Mr. Macpherson McLean's name."

"Well?"

"There's something in his name that is not trustworthy; though perhaps it is only silly for me to say so. You know him a great deal better than I do."

Robert Mowbray did not venture to dispute his companion's theory.

"You believe in names?" he asked.

"How?"

"As exponents of character?"

"Not so much as in hand-writing;" she answered; "but there is something in a person's name that makes you map out its owner's character, before you are introduced. Don't you think so?"

Robert said he thought there was something in it; indeed he knew that there was something in some

names; but as Miss Glencairn did not seem to be following the more emphatic part of his answer, he did not venture to bring his statement to the proof.

"Every man and woman has to be satisfied with his or her own name, I suppose;" he was content to say.

"But what about Mr. Providence Turner?"

"Oh," said she, "I can trust him, though that is not his true name."

"Let a woman alone for trusting aye in Providence," returned Robert, and they both had to laugh heartily at the retort, as if it had been the best joke out of the best of Burns's poems.

But here is Mr. Turner's warehouse," he exclaimed; and, true enough, they had at length reached the end of the woodland glen they had been able to make out of the crowded thoroughfare of West Nile Street.

"Do you think there is any necessity for me to go in with you?" asked the maiden, shyly.

"There is no absolute necessity," he replied.

"You think there is no use for us to return to the bank, after you have left that horrid heavy satchel in Mr. Turner's vault? Do you think the manager could do no better for me than his deputy?"

"We will return, if you say so."

"Oh, no, no," she exclaimed.

"The bank may be inclined to meet your demand for all we know, and that would be the most straightforward course for us to follow in realizing on your stock."

Mr. Robert Mowbray had, in the woodland glen, almost forgotten his vow.

"But who is this?" for a young man, evidently a

bank messenger, came suddenly up to them as they stood for a moment before entering the warehouse of Turner Brothers

"You are Miss Glencairn?" exclaimed the messenger, all but out of breath.

"Yes, that is my name," answered that young lady.

"The manager of the Commercial Bank would like to see you, Miss," continued the messenger.

Miss Glencairn looked to Robert for instructions.

"That's better," said he.

"We will return?"

"Yes," he answered with a nod.

"But the satchel?"

"That I will leave here," and he entered the warehouse of Turner Brothers at once.

He was some time in returning.

At last he appeared.

"Shall we go?" she asked.

"Yes, it will be better."

"Mr. Turner thinks so?"

"Yes."

"And do you?"

"Yes."

"Then let us return."

And so Miss Grace Glencairn and Mr. Robert Mowbray, with the satchel of gold lying safe in Mr. Turner's vault, went back to the Commercial Bank, though their woodland glen this time was under the espionage of a bank messenger that had no sympathy with the cooing of pigeons.

"Mr. Turner was quite willing?"

"Oh, yes, quite willing."

"And you think it is best?"

"Yes, certainly."

As they reached the bank building, there was still a crowd of people in the frescoed corridors.

The hour of closing was near.

"Ah, Miss Glencairn," said the manager, coming out of his den in face of all the people. "You want to realize on the amount of your stock?"

"Yes, I do," she answered with a dignity that made Mr. Robert Mowbray's heart beat with pride as it never had beat before.

The people in the hall seemed to be listening.

"Then you will allow me to say that the directors are ready to pay over at once to you the market value of your stock. You may come into my office and I will make the necessary arrangements for the transfer in gold."

The manager's words produced an immediate revulsion of feeling among the pushing groups around the wickets of the several tellers.

"The bank was in no trouble after all," thought many of those who had been shouting a moment before for their money to be paid in gold.

"The whole thing has been a mistake!" said the most of them suddenly.

"No, no, my guid man, ye may keep the siller, as lang as ye tell me it's in safe hands," exclaimed an old lady.

"That was a shrewd step for the manager to take, was it not?" said many afterwards.

"But was it the step for an honest man to take?" thought Robert Mowbray to himself.

And yet, what was Robert Mowbray to do, at the meeting place of the true and the false.

Was he to advise Miss Glencairn to refuse the manager's offer? Was he to run her affairs into jeopardy simply because the etiquette of a very high-toned morality had not been adhered to? She had to be saved from ruin. Mr. Providence Turner had promised to save her from ruin. What, then, was he, Robert Mowbray, to do? To accept the offer of the manager of the Commercial Bank was to deceive the public, and to accept the offer of Mr. Providence Turner was to deceive whom—to deceive his employer Mr. Macpherson McLean? What was he to do? What was he to advise Miss Glencairn to do?"

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

"I think you had better arrange with the manager, Miss Glencairn," said Robert Mowbray. "If you need me in your settlement of money matters, you can send for me."

And so the transfer of Miss Glencairn's stock was arranged without the assistance of Mr. Providence Turner.

But was the transfer made at a sacrifice to the principle laid down by the minister of Kartdale? It did not save the bank, as after events will show; but it did save Mr. Robert Mowbray from breaking the vow he had taken.

CHAPTER XII,

The maucks hae a house o' their ain, auld wife ;
Jist turn up a stane and ye'll see :
How they squirm and skedaddle, ilk on his ain saddle,
Frae the light o' the truth they would flee,
Frae the darkness exposed o' a lee.

There were many things to do and talk about, before Miss Glencairn and Robert Mowbray separated for the afternoon, with the understanding that they would meet at the railway station in time to take one of the evening trains to Kartdale and Brighton. At last they parted within the shadow of King William's statue under the sinister gaze of the Tontine effigies, the young lady to complete the engagements that had brought her to the city, her companion to return to the warehouse of Macpherson McLean & Co.

When the latter reached the warehouse, those whose curiosity had been excited about his conduct in the morning, naturally enough placed him under a kind of espionage of their own, conducted, for the most part, out of the corners of their eyes as he happened to pass them. There was a buoyancy of manner in his movements in the afternoon which stood in striking contrast to his behavior of the morning, and which would have been easy of explanation had his col-

leagues only known all that the reader knows. Being ignorant of the after events at the bank, however, they could only continue to shake their heads, and mutter to one another that something or other had evidently come over the confidential clerk. The preoccupied air of a man out of sorts in the morning had come to develop itself in the afternoon into the "bonhomie" of a man at peace with all mankind. A rumor had found its way through the warehouse, possibly by some chance customer, who had arrived by the early train from Kartdale, that Mowbray had been in some fracas or other on his way to town, and this had served in part to explain his unusual mood in the morning. But his mood in the afternoon was even more of an exaggeration than the strangeness of his manner in the morning, and no explanation was forthcoming as to its cause. Watch him, as many were now not disinclined to do, the consensus seemed to grow that there was something amiss with the young man. His answers to the customers were out-of-the-way answers, not altogether uncivil, but laconic and abrupt, and by no means the ingratiating answers of a salesman who knew how to overcome the prejudices of a customer while endeavoring to make a sale. There was an impatience in his way of speech, which could not altogether be called impatience—a sort of irrelevancy, an over-riding of the first principles of the retail trade, a proneness to speak his mind freely about the quality of the goods for sale, and their prices.

"Was the man crazy, or only getting crazy," whispered one or two of his colleagues.

"There is certainly something wrong with the fel-

low," exclaimed Mr. Constance more than once ; for having had his eyes opened in the morning, the junior partner was not going to close them in the afternoon, until he had satisfied himself that Mr. Ribert Mowbray was or was not "all there," as he called it.

And, true enough, the ill luck that befell the truth-telling salesman in the morning did not seem to forsake him in the afternoon, notwithstanding the sunshine of his returning good nature. The old retail merchant from Kilmarnock, who had given way to the benignity of the junior partner, after Robert Mowbray had failed to get an order out of him, was no more amenable to the sagacity of the truth-loving salesman in the afternoon than in the forenoon. Not that the provincial buyer failed to give to the salesman favorable opportunities of making a profitable bargain. Like Mrs. Jamieson, who was willing enough to be deceived about the silk dresses for her sister's girls, the Kilmarnock draper, as an over-hearing salesman afterwards said, was anything "but hard to take in." But Robert Mowbray had made up his mind. To speak the truth had become a passion in him, and though customer after customer might leave him without making a purchase, he was not to be turned from his new way of doing things.

Late in the afternoon the event of the morning in the silk department seemed to repeat itself in the shawl department. Mrs. Hamilton, one of the regular customers, who was well known to every salesman in the warehouse, prompted much in the same way as Mrs. Jamieson had been, to send for Mr. Mowbray, intimated to him, when he appeared at her command, that

she desired to purchase a lace shawl, which she intended as a present for one of her friends.

"I am afraid I am taking you out of your way, Mr. Mowbray," she said, "but knowing your taste in matters of this kind, I thought I might ask them to send for you. My friend, Miss Colston, has often expressed a wish to have a "Versailles" of her own, after seeing the one I have, and I have made up my mind to surprise her with a present of one. You have them in stock, I suppose."

"I am not sure I know what you mean by a Versailles shawl." Robert replied, "but perhaps you would like to look at our stock, Mrs. Hamilton?"

"What, you have no Versailles? That is surely strange," exclaimed the fashionable matron. "I thought you kept everything of that kind, and I am almost sure it was here Mr. Hamilton bought mine for me."

"We have what are just as good as the shawl you mention," returned the confidential clerk, "and possibly they may have been taken for imported goods. Our assortment of lace shawls is very large. Will you allow me to send for some of our stock?"

Oh, send for them by all means, Mr. Mowbray, and yet you will only have your trouble for your pains! For have you not yet learned how fatal it is to create even the tiniest of prejudices in the mind of an intending purchaser, as the superintendent of the shawl department, who is just passing and is making his acknowledgments, can possibly tell you? He has the tail of his eye on your proceedings. He it was who first heard Mrs. Hamilton calling for you; and though

you are no underling of his, he is none the less anxious to watch over your success or failure to sell. Indeed, he is even more inquisitive about your affairs than if you were an under-salesman ; for has he not heard the rumors that are afloat about you in every nook and corner of the warehouse, that all is not right with you ?

Yes, you may bring along your armful of shawls, and tell the attendant salesman to bring along another armful, if you like. Your customer wants a Versailles shawl, and, unless you are prepared to select your best and call it a Versailles, it is to be feared you will not succeed. What, you will not even take the hint of your attendant as he spreads out his armful of goods for inspection and, selecting from the pile, exclaims :—

“This I think is what is wanted.”

And if it be not what is wanted, it is surely beautiful enough to be what any one would want; for opening the parcel-box in his hand, the assistant exposed to view an attractive gossamer fabric, nestling in pink sarcenet, that at once enticed the intending purchaser to examine it closely.

“Is this an imported Versailles ?” asked Mrs. Hamilton, running her daintily jewelled fingers within the folds of the fabric.

“Certainly,” exclaimed the underling at once, as he was suddenly called away to shoulder goods for some one else.

“Certainly ?” interrogated the lady, suddenly looking up from the piece of goods to Robert’s reddening

face. "Then you have a real Versailles after all, Mr. Mowbray?"

"These goods are so fine that they may be sold under any name you like to put on them," he quietly replied.

"But is this not a real Versailles?"

"We have never called it by that name, Mrs. Hamilton, but I can recommend it to you as one of the finest lace shawls we have in the warehouse."

"It is imported, I suppose?" again asked the customer, with an impatience everybody could see.

"Well, no, they make these shawls in England; and, in my opinion, they are even better than the imported fabrics. Mr. Sharp made a mistake in his hurry."

This produced an awkward pause. Mrs. Hamilton had evidently all but made up her mind to buy the shawl. Indeed, if she would only be permitted to call it a Versailles, her mind would soon be made up, but that stupid Mr. Mowbray would not let her make up her mind. What was the matter with him? He was always so pleasant, and had such excellent taste.

She again spread out the garment with her two hands, and then threw it over her handsome shoulders, looking sideways at herself in the great mirror near at hand.

"It certainly is very nice," she again exclaimed.

"I am almost inclined to palm it off on you as such," answered the young man laughingly. "The shawl is as beautiful as any that goes under the name you mentioned or any other name."

"But I want to present my friend with a real Ver-

sailles. My husband told me that mine was a real Versailles, and you say that you have no Versailles shawls in stock. What am I to do?"

The head of the department, hearing the query as he passed at the moment, suspected that the sale was not progressing as it ought to progress, and consequently thought he might lend a helping hand, as our ~~de~~ rs have a perfect right to do.

"I trust that you are getting what you want, Mrs. Hamilton?" said he, interrupting salesman and customer. "I think I heard you say you wanted a Versailles shawl. Have you found one?"

"I have found what Mr. Mowbray thinks may safely be sold as a Versailles, but he says it is not imported."

"But, dear me, how can it be a Versailles and not be imported," and the manager of the shawl department laughed as if he had just heard the funniest thing in his life.

"Ah," said he, "this is your choice," and he looked carefully at the shawl. "A very beautiful article, indeed. You're sure you are not mistaken, Mr. Mowbray. If it isn't a Versailles, it certainly is as fine as one. Ah, yes, I see you're right. It is I who have made the mistake. What, not an imported Versailles in stock? Oh, you must be wrong now, Mr. Mowbray, now I know you're wrong; and surely I ought to know what is in my own department. Just wait a minute, if you please, Mrs. Hamilton; I think I know where there is one Versailles at least hidden away in a careful corner. By the way, Mr. Mowbray, will you be so good as to ask Sharp to take these goods away. Just a moment, Mrs. Hamilton, just a

moment, if you please;" and the manager of the shawl department disappeared.

He did not return, however, until Mr. Mowbray had also disappeared, called away by a messenger to another part of the building; and when he did come back he seemed to be somewhat out of breath.

"Ah, I knew I would find it. There's not many more to be had though; a little too risky to keep a large stock of such goods, besides, it is almost impossible to get them in any quantity now. How Mowbray came to make his mistake, I am sure I can't say, no doubt he did not know of this—the last of them. Isn't it pretty? Well, yes, there's not much difference between the two to the inexperienced eye. But let me reveal the secret to you, Mrs. Hamilton. You will see it, if you look very closely at the interweaving of these two threads. Of course, it seems easy enough detecting the difference when you once know the secret," and so the glib manager talked and talked, doing what Robert Mowbray had taken a vow never to do again—to tell lies in order to sell goods, doing what Robert Mowbray had failed to do, satisfying his customer with a Versailles shawl of English manufacture.

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Constance, the junior partner, who had watched Robert's discomfiture in the morning with the old Kilmarnock draper, and who now, on the report of the overseer of the shawl department, had asked him to a conference in the counting-room, "I am sorry to hear that matters are not moving smoothly with you to-day. Is there anything really wrong? Tomkins has just been telling me how

you have been missing a sale to Mrs. Hamilton, and this is only one of many that have been reported of you to-day. You know I cut you out myself with old Mr. Smith of Kilmarnock, and now Tomkins says he has done the same thing in the case of Mrs. Hamilton. Why, what is the matter with you? Are you really out of sorts? The men have been talking about some trouble you had on the train this morning on your way up. Has that upset you? I gave you leave this morning, but, if all stories are true, there's not much improvement in your afternoon. How did you manage to let Mrs. Hamilton escape you? You were always a great favourite with her."

"I simply couldn't sell her the article she wanted," answered Robert, with a meekness that showed itself very near the edge of indignation.

"How was that?"

"Because we hadn't such a thing in stock."

"But Tomkins sent her away satisfied?"

Robert could only shrug his shoulders by way of reply, saying, however, by the look on his face, as plainly as he could have said in an articulate speech, that Tomkins's way of doing things was no longer his way of doing things.

"You have always been considered the best of salesmen, the best in the establishment. What has happened to make your conscience so tender to-day? You know a customer likes to be humbugged a little, before making a purchase. You may call it deception, but it is the universally accepted maxim of commercial life."

"Then so much the worse for commercial life," said

Robert to himself, still contenting himself, however, by slightly raising his shoulders by way of reply.

"Perhaps you think such a maxim a wrong principle?"

"I certainly have come to think so," Robert said at last.

"Then you are just as certainly about to go back upon your record as a salesman."

"That may be, sir," answered the Rev. Mr. Thomson's convert, "but speaking the truth is, in my opinion, the best policy for all of us in the long run. At least, I have made up my mind to give it a trial."

The junior, seemingly somewhat nonplussed at this, put his hands on his knees and making as if he was holding his sides with laughter, had only to exclaim: "You propose henceforth to speak the truth. Well, well, Mowbray, you propose a fine programme for yourself in life, ver fine indeed. But I am afraid, as a salesman your usefulness is not likely to be so readily recognised in the future as in the past. Come, come, my fine fellow, there are many excellent prospects in store for you. Look at me; I have done fairly well. Mr. McLean has given me a juniorship; and yet my prospects a year ago were not any better than yours are now. But where would I have been, had I been seized with such notions as you seem to be possessed of? No, no, Mr. Mowbray, this kind of thing won't pay; let us act like sensible men, and not become cranks before our fortune is made. When you have thousands you may become as eccentric as you have a mind to: then you will be able to afford the expense of having foibles."

"How are our goods to be sold," he continued, taking another breath, "if the finesse of the salesman is not to be fostered by the master-merchant? Oh, yes, of course, some very good people may think that the finesse of the salesman is merely another name for lying. But it isn't. If human nature were what it ought to be, perhaps there would be no need for the indirect methods of the shopman. But then human nature isn't what it ought to be. For instance, have you ever heard the story of the old lady who really wanted to pay more for an article than the regular price. I am sure you must have heard it. Approaching the door one day, she saw a hearth-rug hanging outside, and, after examining it with a caution which showed the outside attendant that she was likely to buy it, she asked the price of the article. 'Six shillings,' said the pavement overseer. 'Sixteen shillings' said she, 'I'll give thirteen for it, and not a farthing more.' 'I beg your pardon,' said the honest man, 'but the price is only six shillings.' 'Ah, well,' said she, 'I'll give you five for it.' So you see, Mr. Mowbray, as we have peculiar people to deal with, people who expose themselves to deceptions of all kinds, and seem to be not a little offended when they are not deceived, or at least humbugged, there would hardly be any getting along in the world without the finesse of the salesman. I trust your dejection of spirits will pass away by to-morrow. I wouldn't for a thousand pounds see anything come between you and your prospects."

CHAPTER XIII.

Sae ye think she favours the brave, auld wife ,
Though the favour be bitter to pree :
The hissey's fell fickle, and aft maks a pickle
To steep our conceit in the bree, guid wife,
To soak in the grue o' her gree.

It was a safe thing for Mr. Constance, the junior partner of Macpherson McLean & Co., to invest a thousand pounds in theory, over Mr. Robert Mowbray's seeming delinquencies. To be misunderstood, as Mr. William Turnbull had once said, is all but equivalent to being considered mad; and that Mr. Mowbray was in a fair way of being misunderstood, even he himself was ready to admit, when he was through with his conference with Mr. Constance. As to the counterfeiter every coin has the appearance of the counterfeit about it, so to the vicious every virtue has something of a vice about it. Mr. Constance was unable to understand Mr. Mowbray, though it was easy enough for Mr. Mowbray to understand Mr. Constance. Through an act which the religieuse now regrets, our first parents are said to have found out what the evil was as distinguished from the good; but how many of Adam's posterity can distinguish between the evil and the good, any more than Satan wished

to do when he found himself sweltering in the fiery furnace men so often groan about ?

When Mr. Constance proposed to risk a thousand pounds sterling, rather than that anything should happen to Mr. Robert Mowbray, the confidential clerk of his firm, in whose future there seemed to loom a junior partnership, he was hardly prepared to say where morality began and ended in the retail trade. Had he actually staked that thousand pounds, he would most assuredly have lost it; for an hour was not to pass before he was to learn that something had really come between Mr. Robert Mowbray and his prospects.

His narrow-visioned homily to the man, who had been carried away with the sermon of the parish minister of Kartdale, was followed neither by a show of contrition nor a desire to continue the discussion. Whatever there was about the junior partner's ethics, there was no attempt to combat them. To combat the pernicious is always set down by the pernicious as a recalcitrancy, a pertinacity, an indiscretion. And as a blunder is worse than a crime, as some people think, so Mr. Mowbray determined to be discreet, and let his superior's philosophy pass without a challenge. To fail to sell goods was an evil, at least from the standpoint of Macpherson McLean & Co., but Mr. Robert Mowbray continued to think that it was not such an evil as to utter a falsehood, notwithstanding the homily of Mr. Edward Constance, the junior partner of the firm. The confidential clerk took his congé from the junior partner with as gracious a smile as it was given. There was no ill blood between them. They were wil-

ling to live and let live— to look at things from different standpoints, and when two men come to such an agreement, understood or expressed, there is no serious threatening of a quarrel between them.

Nor had there been any serious threatening of a quarrel between Mr. Edward Constance and Mr. Robert Mowbray. The former was magnanimous enough to feel no jealousy of the seemingly coming junior partner. There was friendship between them, though their plans of life were different. "Give that you may take," as Mr. Constance's idea of life, was an abyss apart from Mr. Robert Mowbray's first principle, "Take that you may give."

The conversation between the junior partner and the confidential clerk had taken place in the counting-house. The congé was satisfactory enough. Robert Mowbray might work out his first principles on the floors of the warehouse of Macpherson McLean & Co. with success yet, if there should arise no more of an interference than there had been on the part of Mr. Constance, the junior partner.

But Robert Mowbray had hardly got beyond the door of the counting-house, taking his leave of the presence of Mr. Edward Constance, when Mr. Macpherson McLean himself, with a flushed countenance and a devouring flame in his eyes, rushed past him, exclaiming in subdued angry tones :

"Mowbray, I want to speak with you in the office."

"Do you want to see me immediately, sir?"

"Yes, I shall send for you."

The contradiction in Mr. McLean's exclamation was verified by the fifteen minutes which elapsed before

Robert Mowbray was called to face the lion in his den—a space of time required by the head of the firm to tell his partners what had made him angry, and to hear from Mr. Constance some of the irregularities that had distinguished Mr. Mowbray's conduct during the day.

"What the deuce can be the matter with the imbecile?" exclaimed Mr. Macpherson McLean, as if he would not have been put out, had he used a hundred words beginning with a 'd.' "He has always been the very best of young fellows. What has come over him?"

"The thing is beyond my comprehension," said the eldest of the partners. "I hae always had the highest opinion o' Robert Mowbray."

"The man is evidently possessed," said the next of the partners. "He doesnae seem to know the difference between what is right and what is wrang in business."

Then it was that Robert was called in to face the firm, the whole firm, and nothing but the firm. Will he now speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? This we have to see.

"What ill-will have you against the Commercial Bank, may I ask?" half shouted Mr. Macpherson McLean, as Robert entered the sanctum sanctorum of the firm, in which there were seated the three partners.

"I have no ill-will against the Commercial Bank," answered Robert, with a faltering quaver in his words, arising, no doubt, from the suddenness of the senior's manner.

"Are you sure of that?"

"I am."

"Then what has led you to influence some of our stockholders against it?"

Yes, Mr. Mowbray, you had better pause before answering that question. You know you have influenced at least one of the stockholders against the bank; in a word, you have asked her to withdraw her confidence from it.

"Perhaps you will oblige me, Mr. McLean, by being a little more explicit in your charge," said Robert.

"Do you mean to say, you don't understand me?"

"I mean to say that I only understand you in part."

"Oh, ho! You wish to prevaricate, do you? And yet they tell me you have made up your mind to shun for ever the ways of us ordinary evil-doers in that respect."

This was too much, too much even for a man who knew what disgrace there was in being dismissed from his firm—too much to be accused of breaking a vow which he had determined to keep, and then to have the principle of that vow ridiculed in his presence.

"I hope I was not called upon to come here to be insulted," said Robert, burning with indignation.

"No, but you have been brought here to be dismissed," said Mr. McLean, boiling over with rage. "And the sooner you leave our service, the better it will be for all concerned."

Then Mr. Robert Mowbray's fortitude asserted itself just as it had in the morning with the Clays.

"Do you mean to make no further explanations of your conduct towards me than that?" and he looked into his master's eye with the calmness of an equal.

"I mean to say that you have betrayed our interests, You have told people to have no confidence in the bank of which I am a director."

"I have spoken nothing but the truth in anything I have said to anyone about the Commercial Bank to-day. Besides, I am no employee of the bank. How then can I have betrayed its interests?"

"Your employer's interests are surely your interests, and to speak ill of them is certainly to betray them."

"Am I to have no opinion of my own; no advice to give where my friends are concerned? Is everything in the shape of conscience to be sacrificed for profit in trade?"

"See here, young man," and Mr. McLean's eye glared as he raised his finger and pointed it in his confidential clerk's face; "this is no place for such an exhibition of what, it is possible, you call to your friends, great independence of spirit. Your independence of spirit is on the fair way, as far as I can hear, of developing into what may need a strait jacket to suppress. This is no place for histrionic marvels of self-consciousness. The self-conceited are never very far from the mad-house or poor-house, and I warn you when you depart from these premises, to keep your conscience free from all offence towards what you know nothing about."

"You mean the Commercial Bank, I suppose?" asked Robert, in no way abashed by the swelling veins on Mr. McLean's forehead or his bloodshot eyes.

"Yes, sir, I mean the Commercial Bank."

"Then you had better imprison Lord Clay."

"Lord Clay! What do you know about Lord Clay?"

"I know what he has told me about the bank."

"And what has he told you about the bank?" but there was less of a burning of the blood in Mr. McLean's face, as he asked the question, less of the starting of passion out of his eyes. "Do you think the bank is not safe?"

"Perhaps you will excuse me, sir, from answering that question in your presence."

"Then you think it isn't safe?"

Robert was silent.

"Come, sir, do you think the bank is not safe?" and Mr. McLean urged his question with returning heat, with an emphasis on every word and a pause after each of them.

"You desire to have my opinion?"

"Yes, your candid opinion, if you have one."

"Then I believe the bank is not safe."

"You do, do you? You believe, you, Master Robert Mowbray, late of the firm of Macpherson McLean & Co., believe that the Commercial Bank of Glasgow, in which you have neither deposit nor stock, is in difficulties; and have been engaged in disseminating that belief all over the city, and urging people to make a run on it. Why, your belief is as disgraceful as your conduct, and I have now only to say that you are discharged from your engagement with us. Yes, sir, you may go, and go immediately. You are dismissed from the service of Macpherson McLean & Co. Go, sir."

CHAPTER XIV.

How sweet the advice of a friend, auld wife,
There's never a lee in his say :
He maks nae adoo, be he sober or fou,
To tell you what hopes ye may hae, guid wife,
What hopes frae him ye may hae.

The man who loses himself in the forest, without compass or the face of the sun to guide him, keeps moving on, it is said, all unconsciously in a circle, until objects become familiar to him in his concentric progress, bringing him to a true knowledge of the kind of progress he is making. When Robert Mowbray left the precincts of his late employer's establishment he was for the moment as belated as the woodsman moving in a circle—wandering about without an aim, utterly incapable of determining the necessities pressing upon him. The poor fellow was as near being crazed for the time being as sane man can be. His feelings had been so outraged, his actions so misconstrued, the basis of his very existence so rudely thrust from under him, that the only faculty left to him seemed to be the instinct of keeping out of people's way as he proceeded round this block, and along that street, through this lane, and that wynd, along Great Clyde street, past the old jail, and up the Saltmarket,

and back again to Argyle street, a stone's throw or so from the place whence he had set out.

For nearly an hour had he thus wandered around in the crowded streets, until passing up the High Street and across one of the links between it and Glassford Street, and thence across George Square to West Nile Street, he suddenly came to recognize the facade of the warehouse of Turner Brothers. For a moment he seemed dazed at the discovery. How mixed were his feelings now, compared with what they were an hour before, when he and Grace Glencairn stood on the same spot! And yet, should he not call upon the man who had been their friend to see if there was really anything of a providence in him?

A minute before and his brain had seemed all afire, with the events of the day tossing one above another, as a kind of evidence against him for being a man who was bent on making a fool of himself. The turmoil within him had been madness itself; but now there seemed to breathe over that turmoil a restraining something, that brought back his faculties to their normal functions, leading him to lay aside the record that had been heaping itself up against him throughout the day, with a "qui bono" or what does it matter, and fortifying him to assert his manhood in his struggle with life. Passing beyond Mr. Turner's door, to reassure himself before entering, he found himself all but laughing at his crowding misfortunes, in the soliloquy of a light-hearted philosophy.

"The proof of the pudding is the preeing of it," said he to himself before turning in to take counsel with his friend, "is a proverb that hardly holds good, I'm

afraid, in this matter of speaking the truth, or else the minister is wrong about its being the best policy. There will have to be more than the mere preening of it, as I have certainly done this morning, to prove that it is even a good policy. At least the mouthful that has been mine this morning, has been bitter enough. Yet, after all, what is the use of crying over spilled milk? There seems to be something sweet in the spirit of martyrdom, something that won't let a man give in to the conventionality of this very conventional life of ours. Besides, who is there to help her, if I don't do it," and by the word "her" Robert Mowbray could hardly have meant the spirit of martyrdom that had come to his rescue now.

"I have been guilty of no wrong-doing, whatever they may say about me, and I shall certainly not budge from the path of duty for the best, or even for the worst of them. The speaking of the truth has been so far perhaps anything but pleasant; but it has brought no remorse of mischief-making or wrong-doing in its wake, and why should I be ashamed of what has happened to me? How many men have endured more for the sake of—well, what is there for anyone to laugh at, while doing a good turn to—one's neighbor."

With thoughts such as the above, although not expressed in these words, perhaps, for he was only speaking to himself, Robert turned into Mr. Turner's warehouse, and was fortunate in finding that merchant disengaged. There was no one but himself in the inner office which had his name on the door.

The usual greetings over, Mr. Turner rushed into the midst of bank affairs without bidding.

"I do not think there will be any serious run upon the bank by the populace for a day or two, though I am told it had to pay out quite a large amount in gold in the forenoon. Oh, you did, did you, see the beginning of the thing yourself. Well, between ourselves, Mowbray, the failure of the Commercial Bank will not be a very serious misfortune to us—not so serious, at least, as it will certainly be to the firm of Macpherson McLean & Co. What's that? They have dismissed you? How did that come about? Well, well, that beats everything; the man must be a fool. The bank people must have been exercised, I fear, over Miss Glencairn's application; yet McLean needn't have poured out his spleen upon you. You only advised her for her own interest, as I would have done myself. But she won't lose her money for all that, Mowbray, take my word for it. How much stock has she? About ten thousand pounds? Well, you wing your way to her as fast as train will carry you, and bid her get ready all her papers by the morning. Let her present her stock certificates to the manager, the first thing in the morning, and if he fails to come to terms, then both of you may come to me. If he fails to come to terms, then the bank is by his own confession on the brink of ruin, and it is neither your fault nor ours if the people demand their own. You say the girl is an orphan. Let us hope that, should her children ever become orphans, which God forbid," and there was a smile full of meaning, perhaps of irony in Mr. Turner's face as he looked away from Robert for the moment, "let us hope they will not be orphans unprovided for. It is, perhaps, out

of place to make sport of an event which, if it happens, will be a calamity to the community, a great calamity to the community, indeed—a calamity which will affect our business very materially, though it will not ruin us, as it will hundreds of others ; but tell Miss Glencairn—that is the young lady's name, I think you said—that for the sake of Robert Mowbray I will do my best to save for her the ten thousand pounds she has in the Commercial Bank."

Hereupon Robert had to make the necessary explanation to his friend, that since he had last seen him, when he was good enough to take charge of the gold of Miss Glencairn's deposit, affairs had advanced a stage.

"The Commercial Bank people have agreed to buy out Miss Glencairn's stock," said he.

"What, they have offered to buy her out?" exclaimed Mr. Turner, by way of reply.

"Yes, I was in the main hall of the bank, when the manager made the offer to her."

"Ah, ha," said Mr. Turner, "then all is up. The bank is a dying duck, and no mistake. Are you sure that the settlement was satisfactorily completed?"

"Miss Glencairn has told me that she is to return to-morrow morning, and all will be settled," was all that Robert could say.

"That is what the manager asked her to do?"

"Yes."

"In private?"

"Yes, after she had left the main corridor."

"You did not hear him say so?"

"No, I didn't."

"Only Miss Glencairn heard him say so?"

"She didn't tell me that any other person was present when he asked her to return next day with the necessary papers."

"The manager of the Commercial Bank is a very smart man, but I am afraid that the days for the exercise of his smartness are about over," said Mr. Turner rather dryly. "I am afraid you and Miss Glencairn will have need of the services of P. C. Turner after all. The wisdom of the serpent is in all the ways of the Commercial Bank as it runs its affairs at the present moment. It is nearly a twelvemonth now since I first discovered this, and time enough, too, or I would assuredly have been caught with chaff like the rest of them. Macpherson McLean may swagger a bit in your presence, but the end is not far off. He may save himself, but I am afraid he will be, more or less, maimed for life."

"Yet he has been able to make of me a man out of employment," said Robert in his quiet way.

"A man needn't cry because he is out of employment when he falls heir to ten thousand pounds," shyly remarked Mr. Turner.

"What's that?" exclaimed Robert with indignation in his voice and manner.

"Oh, nothing," said Mr. Providence Turner, "I'll guarantee you will not be long out of a place. Confidential clerks of your kind are not so easily had. Why, man, I'll provide for you myself, if the worse comes to the worst."

"No, sir," said he, after taking breath, "there is no need for you to worry over Macpherson McLean's

vapouring. I stick to my advice. You go home to Kartdale ; return to-morrow ; get Miss Glencairn's money matters fairly settled with the Commercial Bank, and I'll wager you'll never rue the day that you did what was right in the warehouse of Macpherson McLean & Co., however the members of that firm may continue to condemn you."

"Yes, sir," Mr. Turner continued, "if I were you, I would start for Brighton at once, or Kartdale, or any other place convenient enough, and see that everything is ready for presentation to-morrow at the bank, or here at our place. Get the papers all in hand and we will do what we can for you, if the manager of the bank doesn't come to the scratch, as I have every reason to believe he will not. It is a conceited thing to say, but I am inclined to think that the firm of Turner Brothers is an institution more to be depended upon than even the Commercial Bank, or the great firm of Macpherson McLean & Co. And remember, Mowbray, this is no time for you to let the grass grow under your feet. A bank takes a long time to fail, but it always closes its doors as suddenly as death does the eyelids."

"You think, then, that the bank is a reed not to be depended upon?" said Robert, preparing to leave.

"To think so is at least safer than to think otherwise."

"But come what may, you will rescue Miss Glencairn?"

"I will, as far as her bank stock is concerned," and there was a twinkle in Mr. Turner's eye, whether his Christian name was Providence or not. "We may

safely depend upon you, I suppose, to rescue her from all other evils that lie in the way of orphaned females. Well, well, never mind ; I don't mean anything ; and you needn't frown at me in a way to frighten the dog that protects the deil himself. I am with you, whatever happens ; and I will stand by both of you should the skies fall. There, be off with you. Make your way to Kartdale or Brighton, or whatever the place is called ; see to your friend Miss Glencairn's safety ; get the papers together, and attack the bank as soon as its doors are open. I've had enough of you both for one day. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, and to-morrow will come soon enough."

CHAPTER XV.

When the ray-lines o' life still diverge, auld wife,
The reins may rin kind-a-ways free.
But gin they converge, they're soon on the verge
Where the soul's like to hae a boree, guid wife,
Gin the weal frae the woe it would ree.

After leaving Mr. Turner's presence, Robert Mowbray had a recurrence of mental experiences which, while all but overwhelming at the time, he was always able in after days, as he was accustomed to say, to recall without many severe self-upbraidings. According to agreement, he had to meet Miss Glencairn at the railway station, and, should it be necessary, accompany that young lady to Brighton. The satchel, with its burden of gold, had been left, for the time being, in Mr. Turner's vault, where, as Robert felt, it was as safe as it would have been in the bank itself, much safer, at any rate, than in the Commercial Bank ; and in view of the fact that nothing could be done about the bonds until the following day, the young lady might possibly raise objections to his going further, for the night, than Kartdale. The question about the bonds could be considered, it is true, on the train before the two of them reached Kartdale, and every preliminary connected with their transfer or sale could thus be under-

stood and attended to; so that whatever his own wishes in the matter might be, he might safely let her go to Brighton by herself, if she raised any objection to his proceeding further than his own home.

His own home! Ah, where was that now? Was he not an outcast? A man without occupation? How was he going to face his uncle and aunt with the brand of Cain upon his forehead—a man ignominiously dismissed from the firm in which he was supposed to be on the point of becoming a partner? Well, perhaps it was not as bad as that. He had done nothing for which he might blame himself. He had simply done his duty, and no man need ever be ashamed of doing that. But how was he going to convince his uncle, with whom he had had his first great quarrel that very morning, that he, a favored nephew, was not a fit person for the penitentiary or the lunatic asylum? How was he going to convince even his aunt, the good, kind, motherly soul, that she had always been to him? How was he going to convince his friends the Lockheads—yes, the Lockheads, and why not—that he was a man in disgrace,—a man without employment, with no ostensible means of procuring a livelihood, with no means of supporting a wife and family?

Then, there was Willie Turnbull and his bet. Oh, hang Willie Turnbull and his bet! Who cared for that harum-scarum, good-natured fellow as he no doubt was? Who cared whether that silly bet of his was to be lost or won, considering the much more trying circumstances that had to be thought of? The man was a f——, well, perhaps not as bad as that, but

a phantom that no one need worry about in the meantime. His foolish bet had been the cause of all this trouble, that is to say, one might have managed better had his challenge not been made. What, to speak the truth? Was Willie Turnbull the cause of the quarrel with his uncle, with the Clays, with Macpherson McLean? Oh, come, this is making too much of the little. Better blame the minister. Better blame his sermon. Better blame the whole system of falsehood on which society is upreared. Better be damned, and take the blame upon one's self. Anything but to blame Willie Turnbull, the poor simple-minded fellow, who would not plan the destruction of his worst enemy, who could do nothing perhaps to save his warmest friend.

There is the fable, which every child has been delighted to read and which Mr. Robert Mowbray was never likely to forget, the fable of the lion and the mouse. If he has for the moment forgotten it the "*lapsus memoriae*" is not to be of long duration, for as he turns into Jamaica Street, who is he to meet, but the self-same Mr. William Turnbull, all the way from Kartdale, to warn him of certain occurrences that may turn out to be even worse for him than the constable whom the railway guard had laughingly dangled before him in the morning.

"Yes, Willie Turnbull, for half-a-crown." a!l but shouted Robert, as he saw his friend approaching to meet him on the pavement of the Broomielaw Bridge.

"What the dickens!"

"Yes, what the dickens, you may well say," exclaimed Mr. William Turnbull, by way of greeting.

"Is it really you?"

"Yes, it is really me," answered Willie.

"But what has brought you here?"

"Ah, now you're at it; now you begin to ask questions," said Turnbull laughing, though his laugh had neither heartiness nor the usual flippancy about it.

"You had no intention of coming to the city, when I saw you this morning?" exclaimed Robert.

"No, but one has sometimes to change his mind. Business, you know, often gives no forewarning, but has to be looked after all the same."

"Are you going to remain in the city over night?" again asked Robert, still wondering what Willie's business could be.

"I think I shall have to," was Willie's reply.

"Ah, then we won't bear company with one another home to Kartdale?"

"That depends," said Willie.

"On what?"

"On your decision."

"What, did you come into Glasgow to see me?"

"I did," said Willie emphatically.

"To see me?"

"Yes, to see you."

"For what purpose?"

"To warn you."

"To warn me?"

"Yes, to warn you."

"Why, this becomes interesting. What do you want to give me warning of, Willie?"

And Robert Mowbray could not keep out of his

manner all signs of suspicion that some other catastrophe was about to happen to him.

"I want to warn you not to go to Kartdale to-night."

"Not to go to Kartdale?"

"No, not to-night, at least."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Everything's the matter."

Robert tried to laugh, and then Willie had also to try to laugh. Indeed, so unnaturally did both of them laugh that some of the people on the bridge took notice of them.

"Why, that is serious and no mistake," said Mowbray, the first to take the make-believe smile out of his face.

"Serious enough," said Willie, "and all for the sake of a poor silly bet, that I never thought anyone would have really much to worry about. You have been speaking the truth, Robert Mowbray?"

"Well, what if I confess my fault, as poor Antonio had to do, and little blame to him?" asked the ex-confidential clerk, though his attempt to make his retort more or less of a joke, was a complete failure. "Is it an indictable offence to speak the truth?"

"We needn't recur to that discussion just at the present moment," answered Turnbull, "we have had it out on that score already, and when a fitting time comes round, we may have it out on that score again. You have no idea how much I have to tell you about one thing and another, and you have no idea how much I am exercised over the out-come of that contemptible bet of ours. I wish we had never made it; I do indeed, old man. Things are in a bad way."

"Then you still think the stakes were not high enough?" said Robert, continuing to make light of Willie's mission.

"The stakes are likely to be high and steep enough for both of us before all is done, or I am much mistaken. Whether speaking the truth is a lawfully indictable offence or not, there are at least two indictments out against you, my dear fellow, and we must find some means of exploding them. There is no getting over the seriousness of the situation, and we had better face it seriously."

Evidently Willie's words had their effect, for Robert again took the make-believe smile out of his face and turning to his friend, said with all sincerity:—"I shall try to make sport of this matter no longer, my dear Turnbull. A principle is a principle, and I am really sinning against what has now become, I hope, one of the first principles of my life, in not meeting you half-way about my affairs. The day, I must confess, has been an eventful one—perhaps to me the most eventful one in my life. There has been trouble enough and to spare, and, I feel convinced, that you have been acting the part of a true friend, in coming so far out of your way to tell me of other things that have been taking place in Kartdale, since I left it in the morning. Trouble never comes but in a spate, as every witch-wife has declared since the world began. The trouble I have had has, however, not run away with all my patience. I am prepared to hear all you have to say, my dear fellow; and if you will only be good enough to dismiss that serious look from your face, which being so unusual is to me so comical, I will enter upon

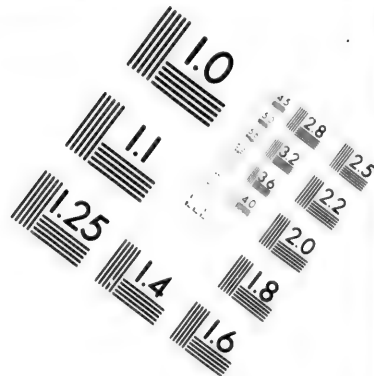
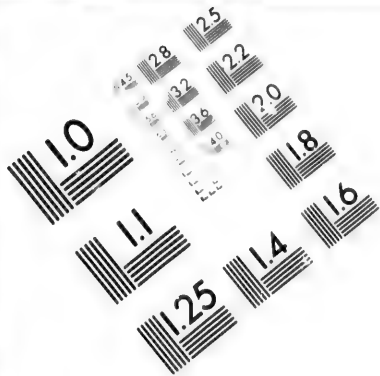
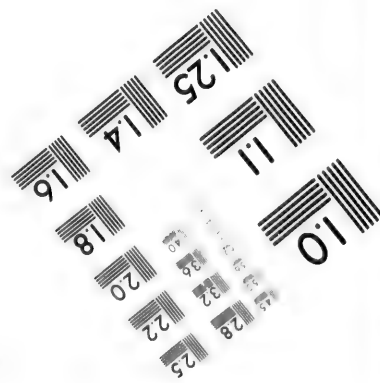
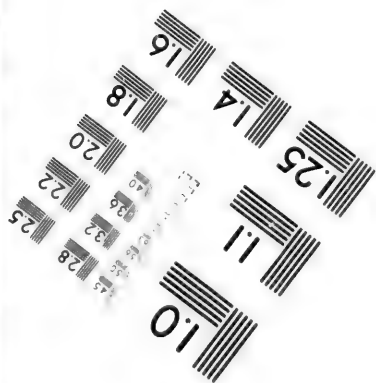
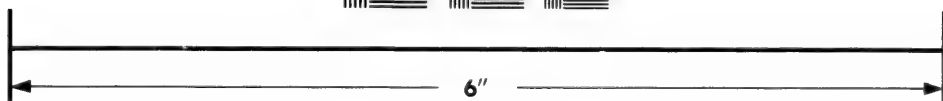
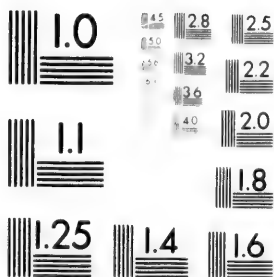


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic
Sciences
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

25
28
32
22
20

10

any discussion of my affairs you may care to initiate."

"You say there are two indictments against me. What are these, may I ask?"

"The constable of Kartdale is after you," said Willie somewhat sheepishly as if it could hardly be true.

"Yes? and what is he after me for, pray?"

"For assaulting Lord Clay's sons."

"Did the constable tell you so?"

"He did, or possibly I wouldn't have been here. I saw him ten minutes before I left."

"And what is the second indictment?" quietly asked Robert, who was beginning to think that there was after all a possibility of his being arrested for speaking the truth. The law, it seems, could be as relentless and blind as Macpherson McLean himself.

"You ask for the second indictment?" asked Turnbull.

"If you please."

"But that indictment, if indictment it may be called, is not as definite as the constable's; but it is every bit as annoying. The "vox populi" is after you, Robert Mowbray. You are in danger of losing every ounce of your popularity in Kartdale; the fickleness of the crowd has been buzzing round your reputation all afternoon."

"My friends in Kartdale think, then, that I ought not to have given the Clays a thrashing?"

"Oh, as to that, I don't think many of them do. In fact they were rather pleased when they heard of your pluck."

"Then what have I been doing, worse than punishing a pair of poltroons?"

"You have been undermining the reputation of one of our most important institutions. You have been inducing by your advice a run upon the Commercial Bank, an institution which very many seem to think is perfectly safe and sound."

"What, there has been a run on the Kartdale branch of the Commercial Bank?"

"There has, my dear fellow; and the telegram you sent your uncle it was that did the business."

The two young men looked solemnly in one another's faces; it was all they could do for a moment or two.

"The many are in an excited frame of mind," said Willie, breaking the silence. "There can be no doubt about that."

"You mean there has been a panic over the affairs of the bank?"

"I mean that there is a kind of panic against you. The shareholders and even the depositors are after you with their tongues."

"For doing the public a good turn?"

"No, sir, for raising a false report. Indeed, as far as I know, the rough element of Miner's Brae, and Dimity Place may be crowding, after factory hours, at the Kartdale Station, to give you the reception that will, no doubt, delight their paymasters amazingly."

"Then the telegram to my uncle has become public property?"

"Of course it has. Did you ever know of a telegram so ominous as yours to miss getting into circulation in Kartdale. You may keep the secret sent in

a letter private for a day or two, but a telegram of such import as yours becomes public property at once."

"Do you know if my uncle lifted his money?"

"I believe he did. But I am not sure that even he thinks well of your advice. The whole town is up in arms against you. Indeed the only excuse that can be offered in your behalf is that something has gone wrong in your upper story. No, my dear Robert, there's no need for you to look at me like that. I know better than that, though your uncle has told me and some other people besides that you really had a severe headache in the morning before you left for the city."

"Ha, ha" laughed the young man, "your prophecy is near its repetition, and my affairs are certainly between the devil and the deep sea, or, what is all but equivalent, between the constable and an asylum keeper. What do you think I had better do?"

"I think you had better stay over in Glasgow for the night," answered Turnbull, "and we can take time to put our heads together about the matter. I must give you the particulars of the whole affair."

"But I must go on to the station at least," said Robert, with a pleasanter tone in his voice.

"To Kartdale station?"

"Oh no, to the Glasgow station."

"Then you expect to meet some one else from Kartdale with news for you? Swift and many are the feet of those that bear evil tidings."

"Well, no, I do not expect anyone from Kartdale. One messenger of evil tidings is enough for the moment."

"Then why need you go to the station? Let us sojourn to the Globe, and talk over this whole matter. I have ever so much to tell you."

"But I must go to the station," said Robert, emphatically.

"You must?"

"Yes, I have to see a young lady—that is, I have to meet Miss Glencairn before she leaves for Brighton."

"Miss Grace Glencairn?" exclaimed Willie, as he seemed to fall back upon that pianissimo breathing of his, between his curving lips, as a safety valve.

He immediately checked the subdued irreverence, however, when he saw that this was no more a laughing matter than his own tidings.

"There is a whole story to tell about this appointment of mine with Miss Glencairn," said Robert, "and I must take my time to tell it. Meantime we must make haste, if we would be there before the train starts."

Then the two young men strode along the street, not without caroming at times off the stream of those whom they met.

At last Willie called a halt, just as they were entering on the street on the other side of the bridge.

"There is really no need for me to be present at this conference," said he.

"Well no," said Robert, with hesitation, "there is really no need for you to—to—"

"To make an ass of myself by interrupting two young—two people who have a business engagement. There, that's enough. Hurry on by yourself, Robert Mowbray, and I will wait for you at the main entrance

of the railway station."

"But I may have to go on."

"To Kartdale?"

"Yes, to Kartdale or further."

"My dear sir, you must do nothing of the kind, unless you want me to think, as others are beginning to think, that you have really gone crazy."

"What others are thinking that?"

"Oh, never mind," said Willie. "As I have informed you, I have lots to tell you by the time you come back. There will be plenty of time to give you full particulars when you return. Meanwhile, I must advise you not to think of going out to Kartdale to-night. You must not go, remember that. So, there, hurry up; I will be at the railway stairway by the time you have seen Miss Glencairn."

It is necessary to say that when Robert Mowbray disappeared, the pianissimo of Mr. William Turnbull became more or less of a double forte?

"That's how the wind is blowing, is it?" said he, muttering, as he went along, very much to the amusement of one or two of the people who happened to look up into his face as he passed them. "But surely not. I know there was a romance in that direction once upon a time, but it was a romance of the unattainable, at least, so Robert always seemed to think. Can there possibly be anything in this meeting that may bring into view the romance of the attainable? Why, there is that charming little woman, Fanny Lockhead—well, I am sure nobody ever heard it from me, nor knew it from me, nor even suspected me of having—of having—well, never mind,—Robert Mow-

bray, at any rate, has never had an inkling of it, and never will, unless the romance of the unattainable should happen to take a turn in my favour. Ah, Mr. Robert Mowbray, my dear young man, you must be beginning to feel by this time, I'm thinking, that speaking the truth has its consequences—consequences that are not to be laughed at when the truth is nothing but the whole truth. I have not had the whole truth of the day's operations from you yet, but what with the constable at your heels, and the threatening hubbub in Kartdale buzzing about that telegram of yours, I'm afraid you've brought a bee's byke about your ears. I hope the law of compensation will be in force before the morn's morning in your behalf, or things may be anything but pleasant for both of us."

"The man who makes a study of the many screws that are seemingly loose in the machinery of this social system of ours is more than likely to have his time pretty well taken up, and the man who, like Robert Mowbray, thinks to make an example of himself in the face of the whirring produced by the loosening of the screws, had better be more comfortably employed. There, that will do as a summing up that is ready for the printer off-hand. I had better wait to hear what others have to think about the matter, before I waste my breath further on what neither I, nor anybody else, I'm afraid, can understand, unless it be our friend Jeames, who is always ready with his explanations. Exactly sae."

In the meantime, while Mr. Turnbull continued in some such train of thought, near the entrance to the railway station, his friend, Robert Mowbray, was in

the midst of his explanations to Miss Glencairn. He ventured even to tell her what he had just heard from his friend about the fracas in Kartdale, before informing her that it was his intention to remain in the city over night.

"And all this has happened to you through me, Mr. Mowbray," said the young lady, when a pause in the narrative came.

"I hardly think you can assume the whole responsibility, if any of it," said Robert, making an effort to laugh at the seriousness of the situation, as he had with Mr. Turnbull. "We can't expect to have everything our own way in this world, you know, Miss Glencairn."

"But are you the only one to suffer? I cannot tell how I am to show my gratitude to you for all you have done for me to-day. I have been saved from ruin, but only to see you ruined," and as she spoke with a full sympathy in her tones she held out her hand to him.

Robert took her hand, and while gently pressing it, hardly knew what to say. Then, looking up, he saw a gathering tear.

"Things at their worst are sure to mend," said he. "And we must not look too much on the dark side of things. Perhaps by to-morrow I shall be able to run out to Brighton and give you a more favourable report of your affairs."

"Of our affairs, I think you had better say," she interrupted, though the interruption brought a blush to her fair face, and something of the kind to Robert's.

"Do you think Macpherson McLean is likely to be relentless?"

"He may please himself about that," answered the young man very quietly. "If his mind is made up, so is mine, though he may not be aware of it. His reward is not likely to be as great as mine, whatever happens," and with these somewhat enigmatical words, he led the young lady to one of the first-class carriages.

The last bell rang.

"Good-bye, Mr. Mowbray," and again she held out her hand.

"Good-bye, Miss Glencairn."

"I may expect you at Brighton to-morrow morning, then?"

"You may expect either myself or a telegram."

"I think if I were you I would gang myself," said to himself the little kind-hearted guard, who had befriended Robert in the morning, and who now shut the door and gave the signal for the train to start.

"I think so too," said Mr. William Turnbull, also to himself, as he stood near his friend watching the train depart.

He
from
form-
city
e, Mr.
in the
ponsi-
fort to
he had
every-
y, Miss
not tell
all you
d from
e spoke
out her
ssing it,
he saw
said he.
side of
to run
report
ay," she
a blush
Robert's.

CHAPTER XVI.

A friend in our need is a friend, auld wife,
Humble or proud though we be :
A mousie can nibble the strands o' a quibble,
And send a' our doubts up a tree, guid wife,
Our doubts and oursels up a tree.

The pawkiness of the guard's exclamation, though not altogether inaudible, was altogether lost upon Mr. Mowbray. Indeed, so engrossed was that young man with the starting of the train and the passing away of the railway carriage window, that was to him a setting or frame-work within which shone the loveliest of faces, that he did not notice his friend Turnbull standing near by, trying to read for himself the romance of the unattainable, in the light, perhaps, of his own subjectivities. And not a word was said, when Robert turned round to find himself, not without surprise, in the presence of his friend—at least, not a word was said that would lead in any way to immediate explanations. Indeed, neither of the young men were at all anxious at that moment to enter upon explanations that were likely to interlink their thoughts and feelings in a way that seemed all but sacrilege to speak about. Men are always more or less inclined to turn back, even before they reach the threshold of a mys-

tery; while there are few who do not feel more or less alarmed in the presence of what can only be supposed for the moment to be the solution of the mystery.

It must not be supposed, however, that, as the two young men threaded their way back to the Globe Hotel, they continued for long to walk side by side in silence. Such a course they both no doubt felt would tend to make this mystery of theirs all the more mysterious, until perhaps he from whom the explanations should come, would fail to find the courage to keep his word, in making known to the other how he came to have an appointment with Miss Glencairn at the railway station. Mr. William Turnbull had known for months that Mr. Robert Mowbray was engaged to Miss Fannie Lockhead, and now he had just verified a surmise of his that this same Robert Mowbray, to put matters mildly, was deeply interested in the welfare of another young lady; and as some kind of an explanation from his friend had to be forthcoming, he felt that it was not for him, or anybody else, to try to force it. The difficulty in this instance, as in others, that must meet his companion while keeping to the terms of the bet they had taken, flashed through the mind of Mr. William Turnbull, as it may have through the mind of the reader, only, however, to be dismissed with a half-condoning shrug of the shoulders.

"Speaking the truth be fiddled;" said he to himself. "The man that attempts it on every occasion is an ass for his pains. The thing is impossible."

And yet Mr. Turnbull, condoning or self-sacrificing as his mood no doubt was, felt that his friend had to come to an explanation, as he no doubt would. Why,

had not he himself voluntarily promised to do so?

The conversation they indulged in was necessarily a very broken one, considering the stream of citizens they had to strive against, and yet what there was of it covered pretty well, in a general way, the course of events in Mr. Robert Mowbray's history within the twelve hours that had just passed over his head. The events of years may be represented on the stage in a couple of hours, and much in the same way this most remarkable of all Mondays had witnessed a rush of trials that might well fill a book in their recital. The shortest day is long enough to bring any man's career to a standstill; a man need not throw himself into the water to learn that a minute may become a lifetime.

The extremes of feeling have much the same effect on the mind that the extremes of weather have on the temperament, or the extremes of heat and cold on the body. Indeed, what the physical frame of man can stand by way of extremes of heat and cold is no more marvellous than the power of the human soul to sustain its equilibrium when called upon to bear simultaneously the terror of abject misery and the exaltation of the highest ecstasy of joy. Few people believe the story of the man, who, standing naked within a baker's oven, remained there until the steak in his hands had been cooked; and yet there are stories of endurance as marvellous as that. Nevertheless, the reaction has to come, sooner or later; but it has to come; and it is the reaction that is to be dreaded—the reaction as it expresses itself on both soul and body.

For a whole day Robert Mowbray had been but as a shuttlecock, between the extremes of human feeling. The day's experience had been a memorable one. and

if there was a little irrelevancy in his narrative, in his questions and answers, as he and Willie Turnbull passed up this street and across another, on their way to the Globe Hotel, the latter was either too preoccupied in his mind, or too busy with his footsteps among the crowd, to think that there was anything in his friend's manner that could not be explained by the inconveniences of keeping up a conversation in the jolting thoroughfare. But when Robert let another cat out of the bag by referring to his affair with Macpherson McLean, whatever irrelevancy there was in the conduct of the one was speedily transferred to and amplified in the conduct of the other. When Turnbull heard that his friend Robert Mowbray had been dismissed from the firm of Macpherson McLean & Co. the surprise started, like an agony, out of every feature in the man's face.

"What, you dismissed from the firm of Macpherson McLean & Co.?" shouted the poor fellow, seizing hold of Robert's arm and shaking it with a vehemence that was painful to the owner of the arm, not to mention the amazement it excited in everybody near them on the street. As Robert was accustomed afterwards to say, if the poor fellow did not actually swear he certainly looked like the minister who had it in his heart to swear, but happily had control enough over himself not to swear.

"You surely do not mean to tell me, Robert Mowbray, that we two—you and I—are on a par at last—two gentlemen at large with our fortune still to make, with the world all before us and nothing but a blank in the rear?"

"I mean to tell you that I am no longer the confidential clerk of Macpherson McLean & Co.," Robert replied.

"Then the whole thing is a—a—confounded shame, that's what I have to say about it—a confounded shame. I suppose this also was an outcome of that miserable bet of ours, that confounded, foolhardy, stupid, nonsensical, idiotic suggestion of mine. Why, everybody knows that this speaking of the truth under all circumstances is a confounded impossibility, and the preaching about it a mere sham—the biggest sham that ever was promulgated by saint or heathen—the most laughable of farces ever urged upon mankind. Why, the keeping of the golden rule itself involves the most shamefaced lying; and when you say that you forgive your enemies, you are either lying or your enemies believe that you are lying, which amounts very much to the same thing. What, you don't mean to tell me, Robert Mowbray, that you still believe that speaking the truth is a possibility—you with your experience of the day crowding on you? Then all I have to say is, that you are not only merely suspected of being crazy, but that you are really crazy, and the stakes are mine."

"No, sir; things have been too much for you. Yes, sir, that bet is off, and don't you ever dare to mention it to me again. Dear me, what a pair of fools we were to—at least what a fool I was to challenge you in the way I did after that sermon last night—and all for the sake of a dirty pound note or two. Ach, there is no wonder that a judgment has fallen upon us. Yes, Robert Mowbray, I am serious about this matter, and

it is nothing less than a judgment that has fallen upon us, you may say what you like."

"Well, perhaps I oughtn't to make all the bellowing. I'm not the man that's gored the worst. Besides, I haven't heard all about the Macpherson McLean business. I don't know all the facts of the case, and what I am talking about. I believe I am as crazy, as crazy—I was going to say as crazy as yourself, Robert, but I won't. It is not the thing to call any man crazy. The Bible says that the man who calls his brother a fool is in danger of the worst of punishments. I wish somebody would punish me beforehand, for I believe I am going a little crazy myself—just a trifle crazy perhaps; but crazy or not crazy, I certainly feel in a mood to condemn all mankind in general as the craziest of fools, and Mr. Macpherson McLean as one of the craziest of them. But I musn't do that; no, nor I won't; there now; at least, not until I have the whole facts of the case before me, as every cautious man should have. No, Mr. Robert Mowbray, it's not you that's crazy; it's me, Willie Turnbull, that's crazy. But never mind, my man. Let us have the whole story from you. Here's the Globe at last. Come on, Macduff, but never mind the rest of it. Come on with me. I know the way. I have been here before often enough. We can easily get one of their rooms for the night, and make arrangements to suit ourselves. As a distinguished poet has said :

" Hold to your luck, though things should go amiss,
The rod that makes you wince stoop down and kiss."

And though we are neither going to wince nor humbly fall down on our knees to do any kissing just yet, we

may as well hold on to our luck and try to change it, in the hope that there may be some kissing in it or all is done. The bet is off, anyhow. That's settled. This speaking of the truth is the veriest gammon that was ever preached from pulpit or platform; and we are not going to waste our time in further discussing it. As an ethical problem it may illustrate Jeames's perfectibilities, but beyond that,, having nothing of the practibilities about it we will drop it as a dead issue. Just wait a moment and I will be with you in a second," and with this the rambling, good-hearted fellow hastened towards the office of the hotel to make arrangements for the night.

When the young men had been settled in their room, they continued to talk while the waiter brought them something to eat. But the conversation became little more of a conversation than a series of monodies, even after the meal was over. During the meal Robert gave Willie full particulars of the events of the day, while Willie tried to produce some merriment over the rush that the Kartdale worthies had made on the bank when the Fairservice telegram, as it was ever afterwards called, had got wind.

"Our friend of the session-house was hard to hold," said he, "when I met him in the crowd that had assembled in the square to discuss the stability of the bank. It seems that the institution has some of the Kirk funds in its keeping, and Jeames was evidently much concerned about their safety."

"I am no gaun to say that there is onything seriously wrang either with the telegram or the institution until I hear mair about baith o' them," Jeames

is said to have exclaimed, according to Willie's account. "But nevertheless I think it would be wise for our treasurer to see to the safety o' the Kirk's temporalities. There can be nae harm in withdrawin' our bits o' funds for a time at any rate.

"And whatever the Kirk has done in the matter of withdrawing its funds from the bank," continued Willie, "I know that the townsfolk did not wait for James's shrewd suggestion, but at once made a rush for the doors of the bank, as soon as the news spread. There was quite a rush and tumble for a time. With the crowd within and the crowd without, the teller had a brisk run for it, while counting out the gold in shovelfuls. What the end was going to be, no one could tell, until Jamie Johnstone pushed his way through the crowd, with a large pocket-book in his hand, and, shouting to the teller that he wanted to make a deposit of a thousand pounds, brought about the reaction that has made your name so unpopular. His example was followed by others, while many of the depositors before long were found pleading with the teller to take their money back again. When I came away, things were looking brighter and brighter for the bank, though bluer and bluer as far as your reputation is concerned. Had you been there, my good man, I think you would have taken an oath instantane, never to use the telegraph wires again."

In this way, Willie Turnbull, with a raciness of speech all his own, continued to make every effort to keep up the interest of his friend by a description of affairs in Kartdale, but instead of arousing him to his usual conversational activity—for Robert Mowbray

was always ready to take his share of the conversation—it seemed to have the opposite effect of depressing his spirits. The troubles of the day had not seemed to press upon him very severely until now. Indeed, he had borne up against them wonderfully, as he often said afterwards. But the reaction had set in, and Willie Turnbull was not slow to see that the poor fellow was beginning to contend more with a trouble within than with the trouble about the bank or his loss of employment. These explanations, if explanations were to be made, would not now be long in coming, and considering Willie's personal anxiety to have them come, there was some excuse perhaps for his precipitating them.

"It's rather a winchancie thing to make a reformer of one's self, all of a sudden," said he quietly, as if speaking to himself, after a period of silence.

"Don't you mean an informer, Willie?"

"Well, informer or reformer, I carenae which; the bet of ours, I repeat, was a silly thing in itself, but to think of taking it in earnest is a thing beyond my comprehension, as Jeames would say."

"Still harping on that bet."

"Oh, never mind the bet; as I have told you already, that's a thing of the past, never to be mentioned again. But about this speaking of the truth at all times, you surely do not now think that it is a practical thing?"

"I thought you had given that question the ban, too," said Robert rousing up a bit. "But if I have to answer your question, I must say that I certainly do even now, more than ever."

"After all you have gone through to-day?"

"Yes, after all that has happened to me, or is likely to happen to me."

"And, bet or no bet, you intend to persevere in the course that has brought upon you so many disasters, within the last twelve hours or so?"

"There have been worse things happening that I must answer for, than the disasters you are thinking of. But, my dear fellow, come what may, I have made up my mind to continue to speak the truth and only the truth, as God may give me the power to do so."

"And yet you really now do not feel as if you were going crazy," said Willie, with the grimmest of smiles at his own weird joke.

"Well, no, I can hardly say that I feel near that stage yet," answered Robert, with a smile as grim, if not as grotesque as Willie's.

"Then," said Turnbull, rising from his chair, "there's nothing else for it. There is something wrong somewhere. Things are not as they were yesterday, and there must be some cause for the change. The cause, then, must be in me, in myself. The fact is, as I said before, it's me that has gone crazy."

"That may be as you put it," continued Robert in his quietest manner, "but crazy or not crazy, I am none the less anxious to ask your advice about a certain serious matter, yes, about perhaps the most serious of all matters that can concern mortal men, and one which, I may tell you, brings me face to face with the first principle laid down in Mr. Thomson's sermon which you continue to be so severe upon."

"Sit down and listen to me, like a good fellow."

"A crisis has this day come into my life, and I am glad you have been good enough to come to Glasgow,

to see me to-day, for it seems that here we are as far from Kartdale as if we were in America, and here I feel the courage to tell you some things that perhaps I would not be willing to speak about in Kartdale. When one has made up his mind to speak the truth, one must also act the truth, unless he would wish to convict himself of hypocrisy; and I am afraid that such a charge is about to be urged against me, both by myself and others, unless, through your advice, I can rescue myself from the dilemma in which I find myself."

"No, I would rather you would not interrupt me just yet," said Robert, holding up his hand. "This thing must be considered in a serious mood. I told you before we went to the railway station, that I had an explanation to make about that appointment of mine. Well, the explanation can be reduced to one word, and never anything was more serious to me. I love Grace Glencairn, as man never loved woman before."

And the pent up feelings of the young fellow fairly took possession of him as he suddenly laid his head upon his arms on the table, with something like a convulsive throb in every part of his body. The reaction had at last taken full possession of him. Was the young man really going crazy?

CHAPTER XVII.

When misery meets with its kind, auld wife,
There's peace in the grip o' its hand :
The mingling o' tears drives the cauld out o' tears,
And brings back the hope that was bann'd, guid wife.
The hope that a douce love had fanned.

The sympathy which Mr. William Turnbull extended towards his friend as he stood over him near the table, was a sympathy which the most of us are grateful for in the hour of dire distress—the sympathy of silence—a friend near by who can enter into the feeling of our infirmities without making a burlesque of our emotions, by uttering the mock phrases of sympathy. There is nothing seemingly serious in a young man falling in love ; at least, very few of the third parties, when they hear of it, ever do more than laugh over it, unless it should unhappily involve a “mesalliance.” And those who knew young Turnbull, only from what the gossips of Kartdale were accustomed to say of him, would probably have been in no way surprised had he burst out into one of his fits of flippancy, when his friend had made his confession. But men are not always, perhaps never are, what they seem. A weakness is often only the veneer that hides the most sterling qualities. The clown is a buffoon with a man hiding behind the buffoonery. Flippancy, like froth,

never reaches to the bottom. And in Mr. William Turnbull there were many sterling characteristics, which the wise-acres of Kartdale had never thought of crediting him with, as they continued to shake their solemn heads over the companionship of the two young men.

For several minutes Turnbull made no attempt to disturb his friend. The distress he was witnessing was too sacred to be burlesqued by any immediate action of his. He even turned his head away from it. A crisis had certainly come into the lives of both of them.

There had been many confidences between them, during the years of their companionship, and Willie knew well enough that it was the manliness of his friend that had driven him into a seeming weakness. Robert Mowbray had promised to marry Fannie Lockhead, and was in love with Grace Glencairn, and he knew that it was the integrity of the man that had forced him to shudder, when brought face to face with his future.

To the warm-hearted Willie, however, there was a plot within a plot in this love affair, which his companion was all unconscious of ; and it was from this knowledge as a vantage ground that he proposed to throw his sympathy into articulate speech.

"Faint heart never won fair lady," was the expression that came to his lips, but this he forbore from uttering.

Indeed, he was not very sure how to find words that would not give offence to the man who had wittingly or unwittingly revealed to him the holy place of his soul's worship.

"There are two sides to every story, said he at last, laying his hand on Robert's shoulder, "and when a man has wit enough to seek the identification of seeming contradictions he often finds a second story that may be of service to him. It is wonderful how a man's experience can tell on another man's experience. You are in trouble, Robert Mowbray, but you are not the first man that has been in trouble. You are in love, too, but you are not the first man that has loved a woman. And because you think you cannot now marry the woman you love as never man loved woman before, you think your world has come to an end. You must keep your word with her to whom you have given your troth. To do anything else would be to sin against the dictates of your integrity, not to mention your late vow to speak the truth and to act it, too. Now you must not think that I am in this matter, the flippant fellow you sometimes have thought me to be. I know how serious the situation has come to be to you from your standpoint. There seems to be no possibility of co-ordination with respect to the two sides of your story. But have you thought that the situation may be as serious to me, from my standpoint? You perhaps never thought that that harum-scarum Willie Turnbull could have a love story of his own—a love story that may be of service to you in your trouble."

By the time that Turnbull had reached this part of his monologue, the two young men were standing with their elbows on the mantel-piece looking at one another, with increasing interest.

"Yes, Robert Mowbray, as there is a flavour of the

ninth commandment in the air, I may as well make a clean breast of my trouble, too."

Here Turnbull paused for a moment ; but Robert made no attempt to speak just then, hardly knowing how to take his sympathizer's words.

"Can the man be in earnest?" was the query that passed through his mind, however.

"You would hardly think that a man like me has ever been in love, Robin, my man. But I have been, and am, and that with one of the best of little women into whose nostrils God has ever breathed the breath of a wholesome life. There, now, you have the whole of it," and Mowbray at last saw that his companion was in as serious a mood as he was himself. One was hardly ever able to tell, of a certainty, when the good-hearted fellow was in earnest, the satirical veneer of his words being ever uppermost.

"Then it is only confidence for confidence," said Robert.

"Yes, confidence for confidence, if it will be of any benefit to you," exclaimed Willie. "You have been worrying over the fact that there are two sides to my story when you find it to be mixed up with one of the sides of your story, and when you further find that it may make short metre of that very side of your story which has been worrying you."

"Your language gifts, my dear Turnbull, are not always within my comprehension," answered Robert, this time with a returning smile. "You have been thinking of me as being about to become crazy, and now you want to send me completely crazy with your enigmas."

"Have I not told you that I am the party that's crazy?" continued Willie, glad to see his comrade roused at last.

"Then the stakes are mine," laughed Mowbray.

"But the bet is off; besides, it wasn't I that took a vow to speak the truth."

"No, but while wishing it to be understood that you are speaking the truth, you maintain that you are at the same time crazy. If you cannot show that there is no cause and effect about such a coalition of circumstances, you are in the same box as I am myself."

"And isn't that just what I have been trying to convince you of? Companions in misery are ever the best of helpmates, are they not?"

"So that is what you have been driving at? Two blacks make a white. I have told you that I love Grace Glencairn, and you now tell me that you also are in love. You think to be in love is to be miserable."

"No, sir, it is you who think that to be in love is the height of all misery—a misery far above and beyond the loss of all friendships and worldly positions. In this campaign of yours, in connection with the speaking of the truth, you have been able to bear up against every misfortune, but the misfortune of falling in love."

"You mean the misfortune of loving and yet——."

"Yes, I know what you would say," exclaimed Willie, "but I have my reasons for not wishing to say it again. I have often had to listen to your glowing words in the days of the love that is unattainable, and I shall again become, I suppose, the most patient of

listeners in the days to come, when the prospect develops into a story that has only one side to it. Does it appear to you to be the essence of all that is unselfish, never to mention the name of the young lady, you may possibly be induced to jilt."

"Who dares apply the name of jilt to me?" and Robert's face became a flaming fire.

"But you cannot marry two women," said Willie.

"No, sir, of course not."

"Then which of the two young ladies will your lordship be pleased to lead to the altar?"

"Come, come, you are growing too flippant altogether," said Robert in a rage, "I thought you said you were going to be serious."

"And am I not serious?"

"No, sir, you are not serious."

"Is it not serious enough for me to say that you cannot marry two women?"

"I know that as well as you do."

"Then which will you marry?"

"I will certainly carry out my pledge to the girl whom I have promised to marry," answered Robert, with emphasis on every word.

"I am sorry to hear you say so," said Willie, ruefully.

"Why should you be sorry to find that a man of honor can keep his word?"

"But you are in love with Miss Glencairn?"

Robert said nothing.

"And you would marry Miss Lockhead?"

"Yes, certainly. But what am I saying? What am I, an outcast on the face of the earth, saying?"

There is not much likelihood of my marrying Miss Lockhead, or anybody else, for many days to come."

"That is as Macpherson McLean may possibly now be thinking."

"That is as I myself am thinking," exclaimed Robert, hardly knowing what he was saying, in his excited mood.

"Then it seems to me you are thinking a pack of nonsense on both sides of the hedge," said Willie. "You can't marry the two women, and yet you would marry, when you are in a position to be married, the one you are not in love with. There's human integrity for you."

"I never said I did not love—"

"Take care, Robert Mowbray. You surely are not going to confess that you are in love with two women. I had some compunction a minute ago, in telling you the state of my feelings, but, thank goodness, I am in love with only one woman, though you have not had the friendliness or good-breeding to ask the young lady's name. But what does it matter? We poor shambling sinners have to adorn ourselves with a humanity which——"

"My dear fellow, I beg a thousand pardons. How forgetful our own concerns make us——"

"Especially when a man does not know which is the right woman for him to marry."

"The right woman to marry?"

"Yes, the right woman for him to marry."

A new light seemed to come into Robert Mowbray's eyes. No one is so blind as the person who won't see, says the proverb. But the proverb might have

included among the very blind the man who is in love.

‘Do you mean the right woman from your standpoint or from mine?’ he asked, with the new light illuminating his face.

‘From both,’ answered Willie.

‘Then may I ask, and I hope you will excuse me for not having done so sooner, who this young lady of yours is. Do I know her personally?’

‘Yes, you know her personally; but I do not think she is the right woman for you to marry.’

Robert looked at Willie steadily for several seconds. Then he seized his hand.

‘Can it be possible that you have been in love with Fannie Lockhead, and would have married her but for me?’

‘Did you ever hear anybody say that but yourself, Robert Mowbray?’ was all that Willie could answer, with his eyes on the ground.

‘I never even suspected it until the present moment.’

‘And probably if you had suspected it a week ago you would have called me out to mortal combat. Ah, my dear fellow, the secret has at last passed from me to you; it has not been a secret hard to keep, for nobody in Kartdale ever could imagine Fannie Lockhead throwing herself away on such a ne’er-do-weel as Willie Turnbull, and but for this trouble which I through my folly, have brought upon you, the secret would have died with me. We are both in an evil plight, and to ease your trouble I have been obliged to tell you my own.’

‘You are a noble-hearted fellow, Turnbull,’ said

Robert, who had also to hang his head a little, while grasping his friend's hand still more warmly.

"Though a citizen of little account," said the other.

"A noble-hearted fellow, sir!"

Then there came a pause.

"Who would ever have thought it?"

Another long pause. The two young men were evidently examining themselves, and knew not what the outcome of their thoughts was likely to be.

"Your friendship, my dear Willie, I will ever prize."

"Then my story has been of some service to you. If two blacks do not make a white, they may brighten up things wonderfully. Misery likes company."

"But"——

"Yes, I was just waiting for it."

"Waiting for what?"

"For the big 'BUT' that was to knock all things to pieces again."

"And have we not always to consider the interest of others?"

"Of course we have, and are we not especially enjoined to consider the interests of those of our own household, even if it be as yet only a household that is to be?" and Willie tried to excite a laugh at his own fun.

But Robert did not even smile.

"This thing has not lost its serious phase for me. Man is certainly a selfish animal, and at this moment I feel myself to be the most conceited of his kind. I only wish I knew what to do."

"There is, in my opinion, only one thing for both of us to do," said Willie.

"And what is that, pray?"

"Let us only leave our affairs in the hands of Providence, and let matters take their own course. None of us is likely to be hanged or quartered, at the end of such a line of action. If Grace Glencairn wont have you because you have been at some time or other—"

"Oh, stop your nonsense, Willie."

"Well, then; if Fannie Lockhead wont recognize in me a relevant aspirant for her hand, and never intends to accept me as her helpmate in life simply because,—because"—

"Well, out with your 'because,' you incorrigible."

"Oh, simply because I never had the cheek to ask her"—

"I think we both have cheek enough and to spare," said Robert, "sitting here discussing the fate of others as if the whole decision of their lives and loves lay with us. I feel ashamed of myself. The Turkish slave-market could hardly exaggerate our conduct."

"But you will follow my advice all the same, will you not?" said Turnbull.

"To let matters take their course?"

"Yes, and trust in Providence for the rest."

"I see nothing else for us to do."

"Then, as you are no more to forget the interests of your own household that is, than your own household that is to be, I think we had better go out and send a telegram to your uncle and aunt, that you will not be home even by the late train. To use your own words, I am afraid our own concerns make us forgetful even of those whom it is the basest of ingratitude to forget."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Surmises are rife in the town, auld wife,
But what need we care though they be :
As lang's we are right, their nebs folk may dight,
And to Jericho's wa's they may flee, guid wife,
As lang as our life's no a lee.

Our worl's within an' we mak it oursel," sings a Kartdale poet, and his philosophy, perhaps, may as pertinently refer to a community as to the individual. What seems to the outsider to be but a mere ripple on the surface of village life is often a storm in which some reputation or other is sure to suffer shipwreck. The smallest event causes every social string to vibrate, and the ethical partition between the mere "something in the wind," and the "most awful scandal you ever heard," is as thin as is the cerebral dividing-line between genius and lunacy. To develop the one from the other,—the scandal that is most scandalous, from the gentle half-poetic gossip of the street corner or door-step—is the easiest of processes where the medium of development is so pliable. During the process of development the laws of comparison are suspended. For a momentous moment the little becomes greater than the great. In the twinkling of an insidious rumor the national or international sinks to insignificance in presence of the oppidan.

Kartdale's world was a world as much as was the world of any other sequestered community. Its weavers and cotton spinners and machinists took the interest in national and international affairs which the loyal citizens of like communities usually take. The Prime Minister and his policy, domestic or foreign, was never utterly ignored in kirk-yard or market-place. But the latest speech of the Prime Minister was seldom analyzed with more critical zest than the minister's sermon or the platform utterances of some village Hampden or budding lecturer. The tournaments of Westminster had a never-failing interest on Kartdale's square, but even when subjected to the most exciting dialectic, they were never more than matters of secondary importance in the community that had a world of its own and made it for itself.

The spinning of a story out of one day's occurrences—a story even longer than this—was no unusual thing in Kartdale. The physical operations or daily avocations of men are said to provoke mental apposites; and, if this be true, the spinners and weavers of Kartdale came honestly by their wonderful rhetoric. Indeed, their ingenuity in discussing and declaiming was everywhere as well known as their skill in producing the finest of West of Scotland yarns. Perhaps the greatest, if not the only, difference between their physical and mental experiences lay in the raw material employed; for if the gift of prophecy—the gift of letting everybody know what they thought of things—did come to them incidentally from the nature of their daily calling, the material out of which they spun their gossip-yarns had too often little of the tangibility of

wool or cotton.. Out of a "mere something in the wind" a Kartdale gossip-spinner could weave "the most awful scandal you ever heard."

In the ambiguity of Robert Mowbray's conduct there was a seeming meeting of the without and the within of the Kartdale world. According to the telegram he had sent to his uncle, there was financial ruin hanging over more than the Kartdale folk, and, naturally enough such a convergence of interests made the excitement all the more intense. The theories indulged in were as numerous as the conjectures that fill the air when one premier goes out and another comes in. What was the use of the fool sending a telegram? Why did he not take the train to Kartdale, and make a clean breast of all the outs and ins of the affair? His idea was to save his uncle's deposit, of course; but he need not have made fools of so many in Kartdale. The bank safe? Why, of course it's safe. Who would dare to say it isn't safe after what has happened?

And from the opinionative the shareholders and customers soon found their way to the ratiocinative. There was more in this thing than appeared on the surface. There was in it the wrecking of a bank, and the man who would wreck a bank was as much a criminal as the man who would wreck a railway train. The prosperity of a community depends upon the stability of its institutions, and the man who would do these institutions an injury was an offender against the public interest—an offender almost as bad as the worst of criminals. There must be a Glasgow wheel-within-a-wheel working against the parent bank. A bank, like a man, cannot escape making enemies, and

some enemy had been at work making use of young Mowbray as a cat's-paw !

And as far as the ratiocinative and its conclusions were concerned, the lower grades of the populace soon found themselves in the current of blustering indignation. What right had that fellow Mowbray to send sic' a telegram—a telegram that would play the very d-d-deuce wi' pay-day ? He was ay; a kind o' a sniveller, anyhow, deil tak' him ! Thae session-house folk are hardly ever to be trusted. The man is as meek as Moses on Sunday and yet on a Monday he gangs fair crazy wi' his whim-whams an' telegrams. It's a'most time we were gie'n coons like that a taste o' the strap that gars the youngest o' us girn. Dinnae ye think sae, Callans o' Kartdale ?

In this development of village gossip into a scandal of outlawry was to be traced Willie Turnbull's forebodings. The development was of course only a possible one. Yet there is little of a gulf between a run on a bank and a riot; and Willie knew, only too well, what the so-called Callans o' Kartdale were capable of doing in their emeutes from Miner's Brae or Dimity Place. He had seen them, in the Tattie riot, the Pawnbroker's Paiking, and Tammie Mann's rescue; and if the excitement over the Commercial Bank could by any possibility be made a handle of by the companions of such as Souple Tam, everybody might know that it would not be well for Robert Mowbray. Therefore it was that Willie determined to start for Glasgow in the interests of his friend. The bank had seemingly weathered the storm, and hence it was all the more necessary to keep Mowbray out of the way,

in order that the plebiscite, balked of its prey, might not record its vengeance against him. The dark side of the question was the safest to contemplate in the meantime; at least, so the impulsive Willie thought as he paid for his ticket at the railway station.

But notwithstanding the fright into which the run on the bank had driven Willie Turnbull and the people of Kartdale, there were not a few, who like Jeames of the session-house, stood by Robert Mowbray. At the worst, the young man had only been indiscreet, and the committing of an indiscretion was surely no hanging matter. Perhaps he had not even been guilty of that much, as the ultimate fate of the bank might tell. Who was to say? Banks were kittle cattle. Better be blate than blatant. It was one thing to condemn a man, quite another thing to show your grounds for his condemnation. In a word, till people could see how things are going to turn out, they had better bide a wee.

The solicitude of Mr. Fairservice and his kind-hearted helpmate was the solicitude of parents, who were not far from believing that their son was not doing what he ought to do.

"There is something wrang with our laddie," Mrs. Fairweather was for ever saying to herself after the scene of the breakfast-table. And when the telegram about the bank came, poor old Mrs. Fairservice did not know what to say.

"Do you think, guidwife, Robert could hae been himsel' this morning?" exclaimed the old man as he and his wife read and re-read the telegram.

"Robert himsel'?" replied Mrs. Fairservice, "I think

neither o' ye were yoursels when ye were argle-bargling about thae burgh matters. It's true, the puir laddie was bothered about his tea, but that headache o' his explained things, until ye began about the auld radical and sic' trash, that sent baith o' ye aff the bauk a' flusterin' and fumin' like twa haiveril bantams."

"It may be right enough to ca' your ain man a bantam, guidwife, but I think you're forgettin' that plush o' the minister's wife. I wonder wha it was that flustered and fumed in that maitter?"

"We're no talkin' either about plush or ministers' wives jist the noo," returned Robert's aunt. "We are talkin' about a telegram."

"And what think ye of the laddie's message, guidwife? Do ye think he can be sane to question the stability o' the Commercial Bank?"

"Sane or no sane, if I were you, I would tak' his advice in the meantime. The boy is neither daft nor stupid, at least I've never kennted him to be sae, and siller is siller that's no to be thrawn awa'."

"Your advice is then, that I should draw out a thousand pounds frae the Commercial a' in ae day."

"An' what for no?"

"The folk'll be speerin' questions."

"Weel then, let them speer."

"But what'll come o' Robert?"

"O' our Robert?"

"Yes, o' our Robert, gin the bank should be safe and sound after a'."

"Oh, he'll tak care o' himsel'. Ne'er ye fear about that. If Robert is no right, he's no far frae being right."

"Then ye think he's no gaen daft."

"Alexander Fairservice!"

"Yes, ye may 'Alexander Fairservice' as muckle as ye please, and yet the laddie's conduct is something I cannae explain except that he has had a whiff o' the jiff-jaffs."

"The jiff-jaffs; dear me, what's that?"

"Oh, never mind, my lass; I'll lift the siller, come what may. There's naething tangible to lose by daein' sae, onyway; whatever may befa' the puir callan himsel' as far as the opinion o' the folks o' Kartdale is concerned. Nae doubt he'll mak himsel' a' right wi' them by and by. Sae, help me on wi' my coat; I'm aff to the bank, guidwife, now or never."

Another household that was disturbed over Robert Mowbray's telegram, as may reasonably be conjectured, was the home of Miss Fanny Farnham. The ferment that began to show itself in the town after Mr. Fairservice had withdrawn his thousand pounds, reached Mr. Lockhead's place of business, which was near the bank, as quickly as it could reach any part of the town, and from Mr. Lockhead's shop, as it was called, to Mr. Lockhead's house, there was always a very narrow gap for news to pass, as Kartdale people knew. Indeed, as soon after the noonday meal as it was prudent to go forth, Mrs. and Miss Lockhead were on their way to call upon Mrs. Fairservice, to find out all about this telegram Robert had been sending from Glasgow, and which was creating so much excitement in Kartdale.

"Mr. Turnbull has just called upon us to say that he was going to Glasgow to see Mr. Mowbray," said

Miss Lockhead to Mrs. Fairservice, after the usual conventional greetings were over. "He told me, before he left, that there was something in Robert's—that is, in Mr. Mowbray's conduct which he could not very well understand. He had met him on his way to the station in the morning, and there was something in his manner that was unusual. Did you notice anything of this, this morning, Mrs. Fairservice?"

"Well," said the honest old lady, "Robert and his uncle had a bit o' a spat this morning about thae politics o' theirs. He had something o' a headache when he cam down for breakfast, but whether that had onything to dae wi' the rippit he had wi' his uncle it's haru to say. Ye mind o' that plush he brought hame frae Glasgow for you, a week or twa gin; weel him and me had a callieshangie about that. I threepit that it was ae price and he said it was anither, and sae I couldnae mak him out very weel this morning. But he gaed awa' to his train a' right. There was really naething wrang wi' him when he left here for Glasgow."

"Mr. Turnbull has been telling us," said Mrs. Lockhead, possibly speaking for her daughter more than for herself, "about some foolish kind o' a wager he and Robert hae been haein' about speaking the truth. The minister's sermon last Sunday night was a very forcible ane, if ye remember, Mrs. Fairservice, and it seems it struck baith o' the young men sae forcibly that they had a discussion about the maitter when the kirk scaled, and Robert maintained that it was quite possible for a man to speak the truth at a' times. Maybe that has had somethin' to dae wi' this telegram o' his."

"I kennae ocht about that," said Robert's aunt. "But it makes my heart sair to think o' a' that has come ower the laddie. Dear me, it's awful; and yet what can ane dae but wait patiently until night comes?"

And indeed there was really nothing for anybody in Kartdale to do, nothing that anybody could do by way of explanation until Robert Mowbray and night did come. There was a Kartdale fama against him, a fama that had found its way to the ears of those most interested in his welfare, and he himself alone could explain how far such reports had sprung from his own conduct or from the conduct of others. And so, like Wellington in his extremity praying for Blucher or night to come, Mrs. Fairservice and her visitors could only pray that the night train and Robert himself would explain all things satisfactorily.

"Mr. Turnbull was very much exercised over the affair when he called," said Miss Lockhead. "He said he could not rest until he had gone to Glasgow to find out from Robert—from Mr. Mowbray himself the cause of all the trouble. What a nice thing it must be to have a friend like that. I really believe that Mr. Turnbull thinks more of Robert than he does of himself."

But even when night did come there came no further explanation; for Robert Mowbray, as we know, did not return to Kartdale by the evening train. And as Jeames and Robin Drum happened to meet on the square, the whole story had to be gone over again, though the deliberations of these two worthies, it is needless to say, brought no new light to the perplexing subject, unless it was what both Robert and Willie

had said about the minister's sermon in the session-house on the Sunday evening it had been delivered.

"Man," said Jeames, "it would be a peety if ony-thing should come in the way o' Robert Mowbray's gettin' on in the worl'. I hae aye gaen in to the smed-dum o' the chiel. As far as I can mak out, he's aye been a sensible lad, and if he has made a mistak at this time about the bank, he'll hae explanations explicit enough to gie us, tak my word for it. Mind ye, I'm no saying he has made a mistak. The bank may be safe or the bank may not be safe, but ae thing I dae ken, and that is, that Robert Mowbray is safe enough in his opinion. He has had some sound reason for sending that telegram."

"And yet some folk think that the young man has ga'en cracked," said Robin Drum. "They sae that he and that fellow Turnbull are weel matched."

"An' what dae ye ken beyond what's ordinar' about Willie Turnbull, may I ask?" retorted Jeames. "He's a respectable young man, is he no, and a respectable adherent o' our kirk, forbye? What mair can ye expect that that?"

"Some folk think that Robert Mowbray is nane the better o' his company."

"And yet ye say they're weel matched. How can you mak statements o' that kind agree? The fact is there's nae mair wrang in the company-keeping o' Robert Mowbray and Willie Turnbull than there is in the company-keeping o' ony ither twa young men in the parish. The fact is, could we only see the young men advising wi' ane anither in Glasgow at this mo-

ment, we would maybe hae a different opinion o' baith o' them.

"But what about that silly wager o' theirs?" asked the simple-minded Robin.

"What wager?"

"Dear me, did ye no hear o' it?"

"No," replied Jeames.

"Why, when they left us last night, Willie Turnbull took a wager wi' Robert Mowbray, at least so I hae been told, that naebody could speak the truth for a day at a time without finding himsel' in Gartnavel."

"Took a wager on Sunday night?"

"Yes, on Sunday night."

"Why, that beats everything," said Jeames, with a sigh, as if the world was about to come to an end. "If there was ony young person I could put my trust in as being a conscientious, God-fearing man, it was surely in Robert Mowbray. But to mak' a wager on Sunday night! Why, the thing is past my comprehension. The young man maun really hae gaun crazy."

"And let me tell you, Jeames, you're no the only man in the town that says sae," replied Robin Drum.

"Robert Mowbray crazy!" exclaimed the beadle.

"Yes, crazy," returned Robin.

"Weel, weel, that beats a'. There's surely some explanation forbye that. I would maist as ready believe that a' the folk o' Kartdale had gaen gyte, than that Robert Mowbray had forgot himsel'."

But when the train on which Robert Mowbray usually arrived brought no Robert nor Willie Turnbull

either, Mr. Fairservice and his wife did not know what to think.

"Surely he doesnae mean to stay awa a' nicht," said the old man. "He has done sae afore, it is true, but very seldom indeed. Maybe that Willie Turnbull has advised him to spend the night wi' him."

Then came the telegram of the evening.

"Guid sakes!" said the uncle, "this telegram business is becoming ower muckle for me. Here, wife, ye had better open this ane for yoursel'. Is the young man no coming hame?"

Mrs. Fairservice opened the telegram.

"Will not be home to-night," it said; "do not worry. Home to-morrow."

"Sae far, sae guid," sighed Mrs. Fairservice.

"That's sae," corroborated Mr. Fairservice, "a telegram is no aye bad news after a'."

"But what dae ye mak o' it, guidman?" asked Robert's aunt.

"Naething," replied her husband.

"And what dae ye mak o'it, guidwife?"

"Naething," replied she.

"Then we maun jist hae patience," said he.

"I'm awfu' sorry about that bit o' fuss we had this morning. The puir chiel wasnae weel enough maybe to argue wi' me. Then there was that headache o' his; and the bother about ither things. Surely the young man cannae really hae gone crazy. What would I no gie to ken whaur he is! I think I would tak the twal o'clock train and gang in for him mysel'."

"I'm glad he's no a' by himsel' onyway," said Mrs

Fairservice, with a tear on her cheek, and something else in her throat.

"Wha's wi' him?"

"His friend, Willie Turnbull."

"How do ye ken that?"

"Fannie Lockhead telt me."

"Ah, then, we may as weel gang to our bed. In fact there's naething else for us to dae. It's hard, but it cannae be helped, guidwife; surely to guidness, naething I said this morning could hae made the laddie keep awa frae us the night. Gin I thought sae, I dinnae ken what I would do to mysel'."

CHAPTER XIX.

'Tis baith dour and daftlike, ye say guidwife,
To rin your head up again' folk :
That's to say folk are mad, and ye maun get bad,
Or plant near their nettle a dock, guidwife :
Nor ever let on what's o'clock.

When Robert Mowbray and Willie Turnbull got up from bed in the Globe Hotel on Tuesday morning, it was arranged that they should leave Glasgow together on an early train, the one to go to Brighton and the other to Kartdale. Robert had to see Mr. Turner before he left, and as Willie had nothing to do by way of business of his own, he decided to wait until his friend was ready to go.

"I shall, of course, have to come back with the first train," said Robert, "to see after the transfer of these bonds."

"And to mature,— but never mind the rest of it," returned Willie. "There's nothing like making a pleasure of business or a business of pleasure, whichever you like."

"There's nothing like having a flippant ne'er-do-weel near by to exercise one's temper," retorted Mowbray. "Of all the men I ever knew, you beat everything."

"Well, well," exclaimed Turnbull; "be off about

your business, as Macpherson McLean said to you yesterday. Be off, and make the best or the worst of things. I'll wait until you come back. I have some internal affairs of my own to settle here," said he, as he tapped his forehead. "If we are to let matters mature on their ain account we must be ready for every emergency. Be off with you, then; I know well enough you'll be no longer than you need be; and I'm just as impatient as you can be, to be on the train. An engagement is an engagement whether it is to be broken or kept. Yours is one to be broken and one to be kept; while mine is only one to be kept. Get out of this with you."

And Robert Mowbray did get out without further retort, and had a final interview with his friend, Mr. Turner. In his haste, he hardly took time to think of Macpherson McLean & Co., as he hurried along through the streets. In the meantime, there was a fate for him, outside of the destiny of that firm.

When the two young men arrived at the railway station, all necessary explanations had been made. While the one would make his way to Kartdale, and do his best to give the true version of affairs, the other would proceed to Brighton, and with or without Miss Glencairn, return to Glasgow to see to the transfer of her stock, and the final bestowal of that portmanteau weighted with gold, and at present lying in the vault of Turner Brothers.

When the train had started, Robert Mowbray again became so busy with his own thoughts that he hardly took time at first to observe those who had taken seats in the same carriage with him. He could not help not-

icing, however, when he and his companion had taken their places, that every seat was occupied. And this in itself was something of a disappointment. He had not used his season ticket, but had taken a passage in the first-class carriage, in order that he might be alone with his friend who had a return ticket.

And as the rhythm of the train sounded in his ears, while he lay back in his luxuriously upholstered arm-chair, the chapters of his yesterday's experience began to keep time with the ruffy-ti-tuff, ti-tuff, ti-tuff of the wheels underneath, as they met the hiatus of the rails.

"The whole thing seems to be in a bit of a muddle, ever since Willie here has made that confession of his. Would it not be better for me to stay over at Kartdale and tell the little woman herself all about the course things are likely to take? She may think she has the right to hear from me first and foremost; for Willie, I am afraid is all but sure to make a mess of the whole story. Poor little woman! She knows nothing of all my troubles. Indeed, I haven't been to see her for a whole week. It seems to me it would be just as well for me to stop over at Kartdale and make my peace with my friends before going further."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," exclaimed Willie Turnbull, as if interpreting Robert's thoughts.

"What's that?"

"Oh, I was only telling my friend here that he need not cut the cards for me," answered Turnbull, "I'm not in much of a mood to play cards this morning."

And still the train marked time as it sped over the rails; and again Robert Mowbray's thoughts kept time with the rhythm of its rush and rumble.

It was hard to say what was the opinion abroad about this engagement of his with Fannie Lockhead. Did the people of Kartdale know anything definite about it? Besides, could it really, after all, be considered in the light of an engagement? His attentions to her had no doubt been marked; for had he not been accustomed to escort her from the church and from places of public entertainment? Was he not her accepted lover as recognized by others? Was he not her accepted lover as recognized by himself? As for the attentions he had shown to her, there was in them perhaps not so much to speak about. But people would talk. And yet why had they not talked about Willie Turnbull in this connection? Hadn't he also shown the young lady attentions? Was he not as free and welcome in the Lockhead household as any accepted lover could be? And yet, though he was, who was there in Kartdale that had ever hinted at a match between his friend and Fannie Lockhead?

And still the train kept time, as it dashed over this culvert or over that bridge, within the twilight of this subway or woodland, or into the utter darkness of some Tartarean tunnel.

"And then, there's my aunt; how much she thinks of Fannie and of her mother, too—of the mother-in-law that was to be," and the young man could not but quietly laugh at the thought of his ever having a mother-in-law. "Why, just to think of the intimacy there has been between the two families for years back! Nothing ever happens in the Lockhead's house but my aunt is the first to hear of it, and vice versa. If the name of Fannie Lockhead is ever on auntie's lips, my

own name, they say, is just as often on Mrs. Lockhead's lips. And then there are the two old men ! When they meet of an evening over their toddy, what winks and inuendos have passed between them about the posterity possibilities of the future,"—possibilities which, may it be said, were as mere suggestions, all but apoplectic in their effects, notwithstanding the indignation with which the ladies always refused to take them into consideration.

And still the train kept up the hum of its own recurrences in sympathy with Robert Mowbray's thoughts.

Of course the kirk folk would have their own opinion about him and his change of mind, if he should really be allowed to change his mind. There was Jeames and the minister and the minister's wife to consider in this matter. He knew well enough that he had always been in their good books, but how was he going to keep out of their bad books, if this "change-ment de sentiment" was allowed to take its course ? There were queer folk in the 'Shaws' and queer folk in Kilmalcolm, but the queerest of all folk were the folk of Kartdale kirk; and how was he going to make his peace with them was a problem that he had not been able to work out before the train had drawn up at the second station.

"You havenae been watching the game, I think," whispered Robert's companion, just as the train began to move once more. "The thing is going against them so badly that I wish I had taken a hand myself."

The occupants of the compartment in which the two friends had taken passage were four in number, be-

sides themselves. Every seat in the compartment, as has been said, had thus been taken possession of. Three of their fellow travellers, to judge from what they had said of themselves, were going as far as the southern terminus of the line, where, as everybody knew, from the flaming advertisements all over the city and at every way station, the autumn meeting of the Western Briton's Club was to be held. If their looks did not belie them, they were evidently on business intent. They had the impress of "the fancy" on every feature, from the crowns of their heads to the soles of their feet—velveteen, corduroys, white hats, heavy jewellery, and all the rest of the regalia of the crook of the racing course. The sixth passenger had taken the remaining seat in the compartment just as the train had left Glasgow; and though the two citizens of Kartdale at once recognized in him the partner of Snodgrass, Johnstone & Co., the great thread manufacturers of their native town, they were not sufficiently acquainted with the millionaire to give him "the time of day," or otherwise to show that they knew him.

After the train had left the first way-station, the three sportsmen had become involved in a discussion over what might be considered the most interesting of the games that could be played with cards.

"W'y should we bother with discussing w'en we 'ave the means of deciding so near at 'and," exclaimed the seemingly boldest of the three, as he produced a pack of cards. "W'at shall it be—w'ist, catch-the-ten, or euchre?"

"All right, old fellow," shouted one of his associates. "Let the documents decide for us. Diamonds, w'ist;

'earts, catch-the-ten; clubs, three; spades, forty-fives."

"Euchre it is!" cried the man whose three as clubs was turned up by the man who had produced the cards.

"I suppose you ain't got no objections to join us, sir," said one of them to the Kartdale manufacturer. "A little bit of a turn on the leaflets 'ill wile away the time afore reaching the place w're we 'alt."

The partner of Snodgrass, Johnstone & Co. was known all over the country-side as a sportsman of the keenest scent. Some people were not slow to repeat the legend that the first hundred pounds he had ever made in his life had been made by cock-fighting, while everybody in Kartdale knew by heart the story of his adventures on the race course. There being therefore no objections to be raised on moral grounds, the game of euchre was started, and by the time the third station had been reached the Kartdale capitalist had become the winner of ten pounds.

And again the train rushed on its way, hardly affording time to the little kind-hearted guard to run nimbly along the footboard and give greeting to young Mowbray.

"You're no very guid at choosing your company, I'm thinking," said he, in a low tone and with that twinkle in his eye that never seemed to be able to get out of it. "If I were not in a hurry I might be advising you again this morning, and that would maybe ance ower often."

Robert gave the guard greeting in return.

"Ance ower often," said he, "what do you mean?"

"I mean that, if I were you, I would change my seat though you had maybe better no dae't till you're

past Kartdale," and the little man made to run away as if to see after his own business.

"I'm not going to Kartdale this morning," said Robert.

"Oh then, that's a' right," and away the guard went, with a look of satisfaction in his eye.

What the understanding was among the three gamblers, or how they had come to any agreement, was known only to themselves. They were on their way to the races and possibly had allowed the notion to seize them that nearly everybody on the train was moving in that direction also; at least, they had evidently made up their minds that Mr. Snodgrass was going the whole way, for when the train began to slacken speed as it approached Kartdale station, the Kartdale manufacturer had become the winner of fifteen pounds. The winning of the money may have arisen from the prowess of their opponent; but, if this had been the case, the gamblers would no doubt have been as indignant at their fate before reaching Kartdale as they were when the manufacturer suddenly left the train as it drew up at the station.

"I must bid you good-day, gentlemen," said he, as he turned round on leaving the carriage, "I hope you will have a good time to-morrow. Ta-ta; I have no doubt you will make it up before you come back."

Willie Turnbull had also to leave, and wishing Robert, in his usually light-hearted way, the best of good luck, followed the winner of the gamblers' money.

Is it necessary to say that the three sports were livid with passion when they saw that the game was up,

and that they had fallen victims to him whom they had expected to "clear out," as the saying is? For a time they were speechless with rage. And when the train had started and they saw that Robert was the only one going further, the three of them transfixed him with a kind of demoniac look, as if the responsibility of their loss rested on him and not upon themselves.

"The hinferral scoundrel!" shouted one of the three of them, shaking his fist at the retreating station. "'Oo could 'ave imagined he'd not go the 'ole way!" and the query was followed by a chorus of profanity that seemed to leave a smell of sulphur in the air.

Robert felt as if it would have been better for him to have left his seat at Kartdale notwithstanding the half-and-half warning of the guard. To be alone with such doubtful characters was to run a greater risk than to be attacked by Lord Clay's sons.

"Did ye know that gent that 'as jist gone out?" asked he who seemed to be the leader of the three, turning to Robert with flashing eyes.

"That's the squib, Ben!" shouted the other two, one after the other and sometimes together, with a like murderous look flashing in the same direction. "'Oo is the hinferral thief? That's the query. Somebody must know. 'Oo is he? W'at's his name? It's a put up game on us, so 'elp me; and, if it be, by all the powers of the 'ere and 'ereafter, we'll 'ave our revenge on the 'ole gang of them. D'ye think as that nob there knows all about it? Ye 'ad better ask 'im, Ben."

Robert of course kept silent as long as the jumbling violence of the gamblers among themselves protected

him. He continued to look out of the window, as if the quarrel was all their own. But when the leader, at the request of the other two, addressed him directly, he was obliged to turn round to answer, if he would prevent a row. Bidding his companions keep quiet, the gambler whom the others called Ben, again demanded from him if he knew the gentleman who had just left the train; and of course Robert, who felt his vow to speak the truth and nothing but the truth still pressing upon him more than ever, was not inclined to make anything but the most straightforward reply. There was no need for him to reply at all, some one may say; but would not silence on his part have been taken up as an instant gage of battle; and, with the constable possibly even now in his wake, was he not to be justified in shunning a second breach of the peace so soon after his escapade with the Clays? He at least waited long enough to give the gambler time to put his question for the third time.

"D'ye know the nob that 'as jist left, or are ye deaf?"

"You mean the gentleman, I suppose, who has been playing cards with you?" said Robert.

The Brighton station was not very far away and in trying to gain time there could be no infringement of his vow.

"And 'oo the 'ell else d'ye think I'd mean?" shouted the gambler, passionately.

"You might possibly have meant my friend, Mr. Turnbull," answered Robert, still giving the soft answer that is expected to turn away wrath, though no doubt, like other people, he knew how little it is to

be depended upon when loss of property is the origin of the wrath.

"But ye see I don't mean him; I mean the t'other," and there was no diminution of rage in the gambler's sarcastic tones, as the accompanying oaths indicated.

The sarcasm having in it no query to answer, Robert was glad of the pause. Would he have to fight for it again? Then he thought how pleasant it would be if his friend the guard would come along and rescue him, but there did not seem to be grounds for such a hope with the train rushing along at full speed. The train was still a ten minutes' run from Brighton, and ten minutes is a century when affairs are approaching a crisis.

"I believe he knows the villain as well as I know you, Ben," shouted the two other gamblers, again jumbling up their words in a tangle of the most hideous oaths. "Ferret the 'ole thing out of 'im, Ben, or break every bone in his body."

The expression struck poor Mowbray with the emphasis of history repeating itself. Were not these the very words which one of the Clays had uttered when he, Robert Mowbray, had been called upon to stand up against them on the defensive? And again the throbbing nerve force of manly indignation tingled through every muscle in his body.

"Can't ye tell us the name of the scoundrel 'oo has been a-robbing of us?" again exclaimed the one they had called Ben with another string of sulphurous terms, as he moved to the seat opposite Mowbray.

"I see no reason why I should not tell you his name,

if it will do you any good, and if you will only give me the opportunity," said Robert, just as quietly as before. "The gentleman's name is Mr. Snodgrass."

"And 'oo is 'e for a Snodgrass?"

"The gentleman that was playing cards with you?"

The sarcasm was unintentional, as Robert afterwards said, but it set the three men fairly wild with rage as they crowded near him.

"But 'oo is he?" shouted the three of them in a chorus of profanity.

"He is a Kartdale manufacturer."

"Oh, 'e is, is 'e?" and they gnashed their teeth at him. "And ye knew 'im all along?"

Robert said he had known Mr. Snodgrass for years, and this he did with the air of a man who would willingly enough shun a fight.

"And ye knew 'e was going to get off at Kartdale, if that's w'at ye call the place?"

Robert gained time by saying nothing. If oaths are made of a cerebral vapor having some of the qualities of steam, it always takes time to let even a little of it escape, and there was by no means only a little of it let off in presence of their victim's silence.

"Ye expected 'im to drop off at Kartdale, didn't ye?"

Robert coolly remarked that it was none of his business where Mr. Snodgrass or any other gentleman got off the train.

"I don't think it wise to interfere with other people's actions and I'm sure I haven't interfered with yours."

"But ye 'ad a hidear 'e would get off there?"

"Well, if I must tell you the whole truth, I can't see

how I could miss having such an idea. And yet as Mr. Snodgrass doesn't reside in Kartdale, he might have been going further, for all I knew."

"That's all in my eye, Billy Jones. Ye knew pretty well w're 'e was agoing to stop, didn't ye now, and mind ye, no nonsense with me!"

"That's it, Ben; go for 'im straight," interrupted his accomplices.

"Didn't ye know all about 'im?"

"I have already answered you," said Robert.

"And ye never gave us a 'int, never a word; didn't ye see 'e was a-robbing us, the hinferral schemer?"

"I saw he was winning."

"And ye never as much as—"

"That's the p'int," interrupted one of the other gamblers.

"That's the p'int, Ben," shouted the remaining one.

"I'll bet ye 'e knows more'n he pretends to."

"Look at 'im and if he ain't a deep one, then I know nothin' about cards."

The man they called Ben, raising his hand as if to check these interruptions, finished his sentence.

"And ye never gave us the least sign or signal?"

"No, I didn't think it my business to interrupt your game in any such way."

"Don't believe 'im, Ben."

"'E's as big a thief as the t'other."

Again the man called Ben raised his hand against the interruptions of his accomplices before turning on Robert.

"D'ye know w'at, my fine fellow? Ye're a very honest man, with your way of it; but it would serve ye

right if we would only make you foot the deficit. That nob ye call Snodgrass 'as gone off with fifteen pounds of ours; and 'oo's to blame if ye're not; and 'oo's there to refund us if ye're not? I suppose ye play euchre?"

No, Robert didn't play euchre; besides he was going to leave them at the next station.

"Then ye 'ad better 'urry up with the dust straight."

"What, do you mean to rob me?"

"Ye may call it w'at ye like. But we can't afford to lose fifteen pound on this 'ere trip, and we mean to make good our loss, so 'elp me."

"That's the kind o' talk for 'im, Ben."

"There's no make believe 'bout that," and the two gamblers poured forth a most horrible volley of profanity, as an endorsation of their fellow-gambler's suggestion.

Robert saw that there was now no hope of escaping a bodily attack, and braced himself for it.

"Do you know that what you threaten me with is highway robbery?"

"Ye may call it w'at ye like. If it be 'ighway robbery, the sooner it's over the better," and, thus saying, the leader of the ruffians rushed upon Mowbray and, seizing him by the shoulder with one hand, attempted to search his inner breast pocket with the other.

And soon the melee was general.

Robert managed to throw the first gambler off for a moment, and felt that he was match enough for him if the other two were not pressing against him. But in another instant the fellow called Ben had re-clutched him, as if to hold him while the others rifled his

pockets. With an effort which the Clays could speak of with experience, Robert, however, managed to turn his antagonist around and press the ruffian's back against the door of the compartment, with the two others crowding on them from behind.

"The door, damn you!" shouted the villain who was in Robert's embrace, "Stand back, you devils! The door is giving way." But before the warning words could take effect the gambler and his victim had both shot forth from the carriage, with the train rushing on towards Brighton at the rate of forty miles an hour. As the bodies rebounded from the roadside the two gamblers swung beyond the open door, and with blanched faces saw how their fellow-gambler lay motionless after the first rebound from the track, while that of the man they had attacked was thrown off with a second rebound down the embankment.

Over and over rolled Robert Mowbray's body until it reached the foot of the slope, over and over it rolled a seeming inanimate mass. A thick cloud shrouded his senses as soon as the two bodies—his own and the gambler's—had made their first rebound. Then the cloud seemed to lift a little as he rolled over and over. As in a horrible dream, he had some idea of where he was; at least so he used to say. The retina had no doubt taken a snap impression, like a super-sensitive photographic plate.

What had happened to him? Well, that he didn't know. But where he was he knew perfectly well. Didn't he know the fields where he had so often joined in the game of "hounds and hares" with his youthful playmates? Didn't he know the burn yonder that ran

through old Fumerton's fields? Why, he wasn't more than a mile from Brighton station. There was the great iron railway bridge under which he had stood hundreds of times to hear the train thundering overhead on its way to and from Glasgow. Yonder was the old school-house which he had attended while his mother and he were living in the country. There were the policies of Frampton Hall and near by the hedge-rows around the grounds of Middleton Lodge, the home of Grace Glencairn. Grace Glencairn! Ah, if anything is going to happen to him, she will surely befriend him. She expected him? Why, of course she did. But why did she expect him? Why, why, dear me, why? and Robert Mowbray, struggling with this, the most momentous query of his life perhaps, at last seemed to fall asleep, with his bruised body lying lifeless near the great culvert of the great railway bridge that spans the highway between Kartdale and Brighton.

CHAPTER XX.

Ye can preach what ye like, ye say, guidwife,
The best o' men laugh up their sleeve ;
Neither better nor worse, aye keen to rehearse
The story of Adam and Eve, guidwife :
The riggin' o' life and its reeve.

A story generally comes to an end when the hero dies or is killed; and even when the friends of Mr. Robert Mowbray learn that he survived the accident which befell him on his way to Brighton station, they will have no difficulty in making out what the finale of such a tale as this is likely to be. As has been said, this is no romance made up of mere "imagination woof." The warp of the weaving is substantially historic; and of a Sunday afternoon, some years ago, the verifications of its incidents could readily enough have been found within the precincts of the session-house of Kartdale Kirk, where Jeames, the sexton and his associates were to be heard discussing the events of the week as an outcome from the sermon the minister had preached on the previous Sunday.

"Man, it is simply marvellous," the old man is reported as having said on the occasion; "it is a' but miraculous to see what a truly orthodox discourse can accomplish when addressed to the open-minded o' God's

ain folk. Just think o' that sermon o' the minister's last Sunday setting Robert Mowbray to dae what he has done. How mony o' us, d'ye think, would hae had the courage to face the deil as he has faced him. This leein' o' the times we leeve in is neither mair nor less than the very squintin' o' the deil's e'e; and 'he man that can turn his back on the leer that has ruined sae mony, and face the laughter o' his neebours for being seeming silly, deserves the highest credit we can gi'e him. What's to be the upshot o' Robert Mowbray's truth-telling it is hard for ony o' us to say. Gin a' stories be true, it's likely to be touch-and-go with him. They carried him to Middleton's at first, that is the Glencairn's place, and everything was done for him that could be done by that bonnie lassie, Grace. Afore the end o' the week, however, his auntie would hae him at hame come what would, doctor's word or nae doctor's word, and sae he is reported as mending. They say that the thing is likely to gang to his head."

"They also say," remarked one of Jeames's hearers, "that the thought o' his being at Middleton gaed to somebody else's head."

"Sae I've heard mysel' as some auld wife's claivers," the sexton is said to have answered. "But an auld wife's claivers are no to be classified wi' the Christian compassionings o' a' Sunday afternoon. The worldly-minded may discuss that phase o' the question the morn's morning, when there's nae boundary line to hear-say conversations. As for me, a' I can say is that I fain hope that the young man 'ill soon be round amang us again. Even though he has lost his place

in Glesca, puir man, he hasnae lost his place in the estimation o' honest men. Exactly sae !"

"The trial of the three rascallions who attacked him is likely to be maist interesting," said Robin Drum, venturing at last to put in his word.

"You mean the twa rascallions, Mr. Drum," answered Jeames, determined to keep the conversation in his own hand. "Ane o' the scoundrels was killed outright, as ye ken; and the ither twa were caught the same day and ta'en to the county jail. The trial 'ill be in Glesca, and, as ye say, will nae doubt be interesting reading to the maist o' us. When the thing gets into the Circuit Court there'll be nae hiding o' much; and yet I sometimes think it would be just as weel if everything didnae come out, as muckle for the sake o' Mr. Snodgrass as for the sake o' the young men themselves and their connections."

"What's that !" exclaimed Robin Drum, "D'ye really ken the robbers, Jeames ?"

"The robbers ! Wha's speaking about the robbers ?"

"The gamblers, I mean," returned Robin abashed.

"And what about the gamblers ?"

"Werenae ye saying something about the young men and their connections."

"I was that."

"And ye didnae mean the gamblers ?"

"No, Mr. Drum, I didnae mean the gamblers. What would I mean the gamblers for ? Do you think to ca' Mr. Snodgrass a gambler ? "

Mr. Robin Drum, who was an employee of the firm of Messrs. Snodgrass, Johnstone & Co., of course did

not mean to give his own employer a name so ugly as that of gambler.

"Then what young men were you alluding to?"

"Wha could I be alluding to but the man that was nearly killed and his frien' and my frien', Mr. Willie Turnbull."

"Oh, that's it, is it; no the robbers; no the gamblers, but the twa rivals."

Robin Dunn was evidently nettled at Jeames's manner towards him.

"Ye may ca' them what ye like, Mr. Drum; if they hae become rivals, they hae ne'er been aught but the best o' frien's in my recollection; and gin what I hae heard, nae langer gaen than yesterday, be true, they're just as likely as no to continue frien's to the end o' the chapter, though we are maybe verging on a kind o' conversation that's hardly the proper kind o' talk for a Sabbath afternoon."

.

Two subsequent scenes sealed the fate of the two friends who had wagered about the truth; and at last Willie Turnbull's bet was declared off by both parties. When Robert Mowbray's convalescence had been assured, the world had gone on apace, bringing the young man nearer his reward, which was to be found neither in a prison nor in an asylum. By a process which need not here be analyzed, the spirit of truth, like some guardian angel, had seemingly taken charge of the fortunes of the four young people, who had for long been crossing hands in alternate embrace, as if by way of

prophecy that a wedding, if not two, were about to take place.

What part the guardian angel allowed Willie Turnbull to play in the development of the denouement it is not for anyone to say. If Miss Fannie Lockhead had left a record of the several interviews which that young man had with her during the days Robert Mowbray was lying insensible at Middleton, the steps taken, to prevent the affairs of life for these young people from going aglee, might have been set forth in this narrative with some precision. That the said Willie Turnbull had many whispering interviews of one kind or another about his friend's affairs, was borne out by the fact that everybody in Kartdale knew all the outs and ins of the case before Robert Mowbray had returned to consciousness; and how could gossips have been put in possession of these outs and ins unless by Willie Turnbull, the only man who, for the time being, knew of them and could talk of them. Thanks to the good-hearted fellow, the first interview which Robert had with Miss Lockhead after his convalescence assumed less of the "frightful" than had been contemplated; and when, weeks after, Willie was able to tell his friend that Fannie and he had "kissed t' e book across the water," Robert Mowbray found himself again in presence of the new heavens and the new earth, with the face of Grace Glencairn looking out upon him from the shrubbery of Middleton, as he wended his way up the avenue to visit her for the first time after his sickness.

The Commercial Bank recovered itself for a time, but in the end had to close its doors, bringing down

the firm of Macpherson McLean & Co., and many others amid the general ruin. With the assistance of Mr. Providence Turner, Robert Mowbray was able to find a secure place for Miss Glencairn's money, and when he himself had found employment through the same assistance, in another of the great firms of the great city, there came within the horizon of Mr. and Mrs. Fairservice the prospect of the best of things for them and their nephew.

In less than a year after the preaching of the minister's famous sermon, two weddings took place in the town of Kartdale, that seemed to bring a good deal of satisfaction to our friend Jeames, the seer of the session-house.

"That is just as it should be," he is said to have declared after the double event had taken place. "They are a' bairns o' our ain folk, and that is a guid kind o' a prognostic. There's nae loss and there maun be a gain. I hae kenn'd them a' since they were born, and they a' come frae douce folk, and douce folk they'll a' become, for if Robert Mowbray and Grace Glencairn be weel matched, Fannie Lockhead and Willie Turnbull are better matched, for what the tane wants the tither has, and tak' my word for it, Willie 'ill mak' a guid husband and a worthy citizen, gin a' be said and done. As for Robert Mowbray and his guidwife, a' that I hae to say about them is what everybody is saying, 'God bless them!' Exactly sae!"